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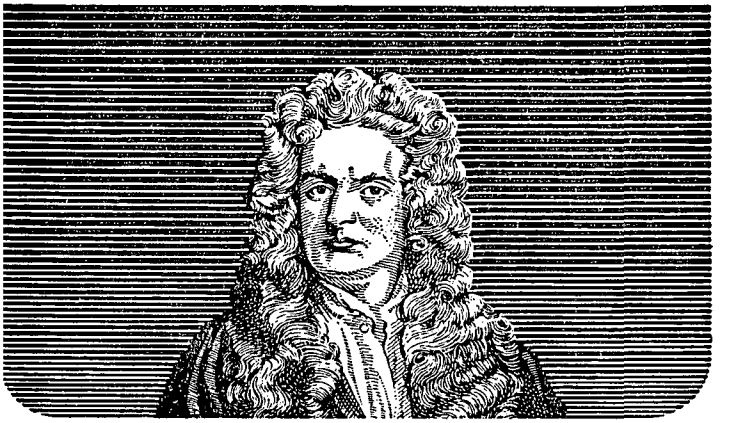

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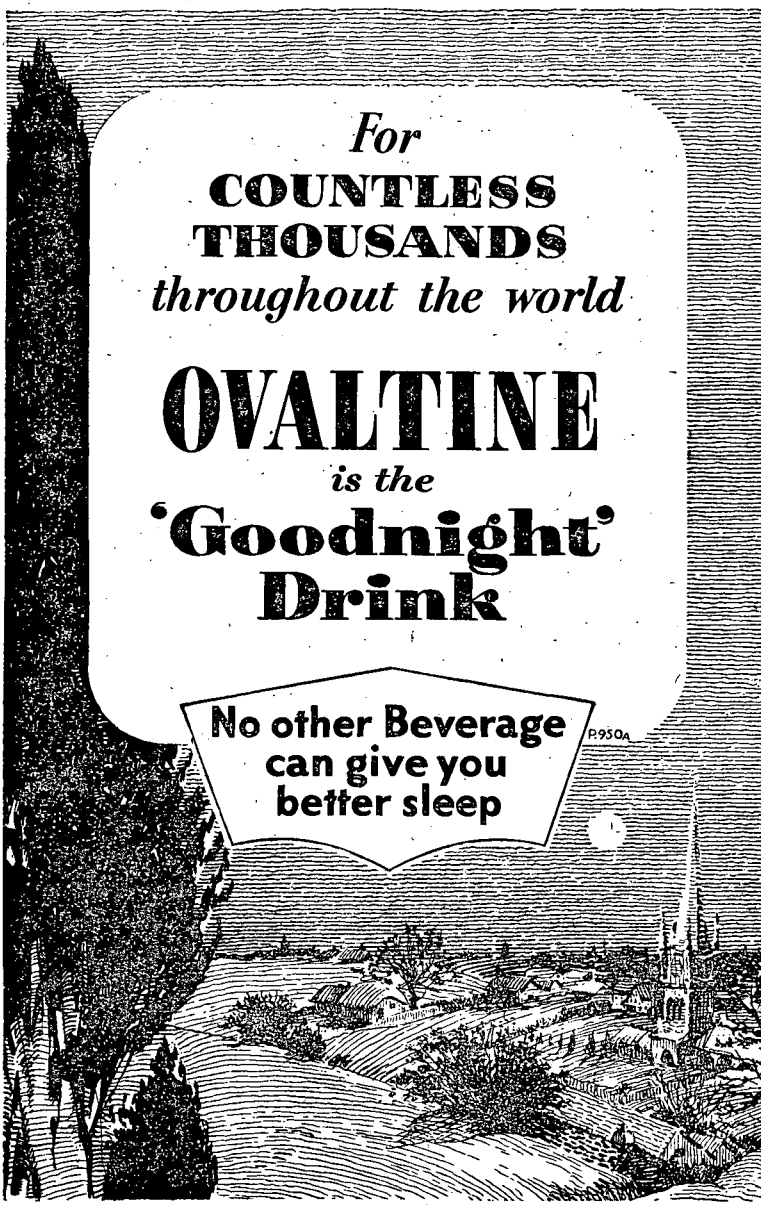

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ARGOSY

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Spring Thaw

MARROW-RIME melts in every bony twig,
Snowdrifts ascend in slow smoke through the trees,
The little hill puts on her emerald wig,
And the cramped mountains stretch their iron knees.
Somewhere within the icy-jewelled cyst
Of January, June begins to sing
Like a pale princess, signalling to spring
To break the spell of winter's amethyst.

The brook, a singing mouse, begins to run;
The melting ice-cat barely lifts a paw;
Drugged by the drowsy acorns of the sun,
The frost-hawk slumbers, and no wind-crows caw;
And spring, that spinner of green joy, has spun
Her first thread in this January thaw.

HENRY MORTON ROBINSON

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DEVIL OF A FISH

Marina found it hard to share his heart with a trout stream

by WILFRED McNEILLY

JONATHAN McCABE looked at the fire. It looked right back at him, leeringly, and spat a malicious fragment of blazing beech onto the stone flags of the big kitchen floor.

There was a pricking at Jonathan's eyeballs, and if he had been ten instead of thirty, there would have been tears trickling down his round, friendly, weather-beaten face. But being a man and above tears, he had recourse to curses.

"Damn it t' hell," he muttered in the crisp, bitter accent of the County Antrim. "What's got intil her?"

If he had been the sort of man to kick a dog, he would certainly have given Bran the benefit of his heavy farm boot in his ribs, for the big wolf-hound lay in placid calm before the fire, just as if the sky had not fallen in.

It was the same farm kitchen, in all material respects, that it had been ten minutes earlier. The flowered chintz curtains fluttered doucely at the half-opened windows, the willow-pattern plates on the white-scrubbed sideboard still told their ageless story, the polished brassware, pride of any kitchen in the County Antrim, still outshone the fire in the blackleaded grate. The intolerable Bobo swam as serenely as ever in the rounded confines of his crystal bowl.

And yet it was no longer the same kitchen. It was a dead, empty kitchen, a skeleton of a kitchen, a mocking cadaver that should be buried decently and no longer plague a man.

Marina was gone.

In his head the tittup of her heels—heels too high for a sensible farmer's wife—still echoed across the stone floor. He could see again the disdainful flirt of her skirt as she slammed the door behind her. He could see again the look on her proud, high-cheeked face as she said the one word that separated them, a word that wrinkled her nose in disgust as if the object were beneath the dainty nostrils, a word that curled her lips into a bitter sneer.

"*Fish!*"

Just that and no more, but the word was a ten-page letter in

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itself. It dragged out from the decent obscurity of the unsaid all the little bitternesses that had come between them, all the half-started and half-made-up quarrels.

Marina McCabe liked fish well enough—on a plate: Jonathan had a passion for fish—on a hook.

Between them now, like a barrier, lay the days of the last eighteen months; the days since they had come to Ballyyeraght Farm, with its neat, whitewashed steading, its seventy acres, threaded through by the Ballyyeraght River with its runs and shallows, and the long-drawn sweetness of the Bailiff's Pool. Excepting Sundays only, there was hardly a day that did not see Jonathan step out from the house with a lilting whistle, and his battered, greenheart rod.

It is given to few women to understand the pull of the running stream and the racing reel, and the calm that comes over a man's mind with the feel of the smooth cork grip in his right hand. Marina was not one of these few. She found it hard to share her husband's heart with a trout stream—and it but a spit and a step from her own back door.

But she tholed her sorrows, as they say in the County Antrim, and did as a good wife should. She tried to join in her husband's play, and even listened attentively when other anglers came, and spoke the whole night through of the Butcher and Greenwell's Glory, of Blackwater and the Main, of sea-trout and dollaghan; and hardly ever showed that while they talked of their flies and their rivers and their fish, she was meditating on the pattern of her next frock.

A good wife, she, and loved Jonathan, and the trout she could bear since it was only an hour Jonathan would steal—or maybe two—alone with his rod and the midges and the running water. And she could eat the trout that he brought home, and relish them the more that he had caught them.

That was before the coming of the Pike. As the Serpent stole unseen into the Garden, so did the Pike enter the Ballyyeraght. One day there was no finer trout stream in the whole of the County Antrim; the next day the Pike's evil shadow lay in the deeps beneath the willow that wept on the Bailiff's Pool . . .

No matter how long Jonathan fished, he liked to finish the day with a cast over the Bailiff's Pool. Deep and dark, with a light riffle at the tail, the Bailiff's Pool, named for a forgotten encounter with poachers, always held two trout, two good fighting fish that would make a man's reel sing and his rod dance, and come at last to the net in a pride of speckled beauty.

There were always two good trout, no more and no less, in

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the Pool, however often Jonathan might take them. As soon as one was taken, its place was filled by another trout moving upstream, for it is the manner of trout that they never let a good berth lie tenantless long, and it is the biggest that get the best berths. There were two positions in the Pool, beneath the hanging willow and under the big black rock that clove the head of the Pool, and in either of these places a fish was assured of the best food supply in the whole river.

Not that Jonathan always took a trout there. Even in Paradise there are blank days when the celestial fins beat slow and the squamous lords of the asphodel-bordered streams ignore the feathered lure. But even when he failed to get a rise, Jonathan knew he was not casting in empty water. The fish were there, beneath the willow or under the rock.

That was before the Pike came. Perhaps it came up from Lough Neagh, that great fish with its dark green, striped tiger's body and its ravening beak of a mouth. Perhaps it was spawned in hell.

This latter view was Jonathan's after one week. The first sight of the great head jutting from the shadow of the willow prompted Jonathan to little more than annoyance at the existence of the Pike, and a certain pleasurable excitement at the thought of catching it.

"There's a big pike down in the Bailiff's Pool," he remarked to Marina. "I'll need to be getting it out of there or it'll have the fishing destroyed."

Marina hardly knew what a pike was.

The farm work was skimped and hurried through so that Jonathan could get down to the Pool as soon as possible. Gear he brought out whose very name a decent fly-fisherman should not know, though to his credit be it said that the contraptions were not of his buying. There were fearsome contrivances of brass and silver, gaudy with enamel and festooned about with clusters of vicious triangle hooks. There were spoons, spinners, minnows, wobblers, and startling things with articulated bodies, all of which had been left at the farm by Marina's brother when on a visit from Florida where, no doubt, the fish are less fastidious.

One by one Jonathan dragged these other-worldly arrangements past the unresponsive nose of the Pike. At first he fished contemptuously—for it is an understood thing among trout fishers that there is nothing easier to catch than a pike—then he fished with care, and at last with anxiety.

The Pike would have none of his lures. For the first one or two, it did stir itself sufficiently to follow the glittering spoon for a few yards, but thereafter its head might have been the log of

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rotting wood it so much resembled, for all the attention it paid.

The Pike did not neglect its own needs. On many an evening Jonathan saw the great fish, after ignoring his spoons and spinners—presented now with all the cunning he could muster—suddenly flit like a green shadow across the Pool, to snap up the luckless trout that had moved upstream to take the place of its equally unlucky senior.

Bitter the frustration Jonathan felt in those moments when the trout's golden side glinted in the Pike's jaw, for if the Pike had not moved, at least he could have felt it was in no mood to feed.

The Pike despised Jonathan, and that was the truth of it. It is a terrible thing to be despised of men; how much worse to be the object of a pike's contempt.

He sat in the kitchen, of a night, peering into the fire, not hearing or half hearing Marina's chatter, and not answering at all unless spoken to three times. All his talk was of the Pike and of the means he could use to take it, but there was little enough talk, for mostly he sat and thought.

The more he tried to catch the Pike, the more he failed and the more open became the fish's contempt. Jonathan was driven to expedients which in his saner moments he would not even think of using. He tried to snatch the Pike with a weighted bunch of triangle hooks, laid cunningly on the bottom and heaved upward as the fish passed over.

He touched it once, felt for a moment the thrill in his line as a barb bit into the pale yellow belly. That touch moved the fish, all right. For a moment it seemed that it had moved the whole Pool. Water lifted and spread and splattered wide, as the fish took the air. And when it fell, the hook had pulled free . . .

The men of the County Antrim are stubborn men whose descendants have a great tendency to become presidents of the United States or generals in the British army. They are hard men, and bitter when roused, and not to be turned from their purpose. Jonathan took a long-handled gaff and a powerful torch, and went to the Bailiff's Pool in the dark hours. He shone down the torch and gently lowered the broad hook of the gaff until it lay in the water just beneath the Pike's spreading gills.

Still lay the Pike in the water, still and black and evil, until the second when Jonathan's grip tightened on the tough ash pole of the gaff. Then its tail flirted slightly, and sideways it glided. Only a foot, only enough to be safe from the menace of the gaff.

Jonathan's hand trembled as he moved the gaff slowly, swinging it under the fish again. The Pike swayed gently away, not far, just clear of the gaff's broad hook. The sweat dewed Jona-

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than's forehead, his lips trembled, and little tears of anger squeezed from the corners of his eyes.

"It knows," he half sobbed. "It's . . . it's mocking me!"

The eyes of the Pike reflected the glow of his torch back to him. The yellow ring round the dark iris pulsed with venomous fire.

It was then that Jonathan knew that the fish was the Devil. In the County Antrim, the old days and the old ways lie close about men, and the Devil is not a psychological chimera but a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. When God is real, the Devil is real, too, and in the County Antrim God is very real.

Jonathan lay cold and quiet beside Marina that night, and his ear did not hear her, nor his hand touch. And Marina began to wonder if there was more than fish that kept her man out so long in the dark—and if fish alone might not be worst of all, for another woman could be fought with the weapons of women, but how can a girl fight fish? And yet she had to fight, for she was of the County Antrim, too, where to give up fighting is to giving up living.

Marina was a woman who needed love as a trout needs water. In short, she was a woman. In the matter of the Pike she was like a fine split-cane fishing-rod that will bend and bend but, at the last, will crack and splinter suddenly. So to Jonathan she came, and he turning the depths of his soul to examine whether there was any device yet remaining to take the Pike. The cold horror of the idea now taking shape in his mind had appalled him.

He did not hear or heed Marina's talk of knitting or note the size of the garment on the needles that she waved in front of him. For he had thought of poisoning the Pool, and the thought of poisoning the water is to a fisherman as would be the idea of spitting on the Koran to a Mussulman: black sacrilege beyond forgiveness. And yet he had thought the thought.

"Would you let me have some of that wool?" he said at last, when the tiny garment was thrust almost down his throat as Marina knitted at him. "It might be just the colour to move the big fella, for it's queer the colours that fish—"

The knitting hit the floor and the needles rattled on the stone, and Marina stood there like a single burning flame, and that was the end of it.

There dropped from her lips that one word, scarifying and beyond retraction and full of all she felt: "*Fish!*"

Then she was gone, and the stairs clattered with the fury of her feet, and the kitchen ceiling trembled as she threw her case on the bedroom floor above. And still there was time for Jonathan to rise swiftly and go to her and fold her in his arms, and

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say nothing but look sheeplike for forgiveness. But still he did not stir.

Not till he heard her coming down the stairs again and slamming out to the car did he rise from the battered wicker chair that embraced him. And then it was to walk, bewildered, too slowly to reach the car before she drove off with a crash of gears and a wild revving of the engine.

She was gone and her knitting lying there still, a delicate, tiny thing of pale blue wool on the pink plastic needles.

"What has et her at all?" Jonathan sank slowly back into the grip of the wicker chair, and fingered the fine wool, and did not understand.

The wool wrapped round a plug, he thought vaguely, might be the lure the Pike would take.

But half his mind still wrestled with Marina's going. She had been funny these last three weeks, he thought, since the Pike had come. Snuggling close to him, darting secret glances. Had the Pike bewitched her too? This was the measure of his absorption in the fish, that he believed its influence extended beyond the Pool.

And why not, if it *was* the Devil? He needs his sacrifices, too. Live ones.

And perhaps it was the Devil that sent Jonathan's eye roving then to the window-sill. A live sacrifice. *Live bait.*

Bobo swam slowly and contentedly, a goldfish of placid ways and comfortable habit, a fish of sagacity who would take offerings of ants' eggs from no fingers but his mistress's. A fat, gleaming fish.

Jonathan remembered the one thing he had not yet used to tempt the Pike: live bait.

It had often puzzled Jonathan that Marina should keep a goldfish as her pet, she whose contempt for fish was so comprehensive. But Bobo was different. She did not think of him as a fish: he was Bobo.

He lived in a crystal bowl and took ants' eggs from her fingers; fish lived in the river and took hooks. That was the difference. And Bobo was her great delight. She could watch his slow curvettings for minutes on end, a little smile on her lips and her mind quite blank.

Jonathan saw the goldfish, but he did not see Bobo. He saw live bait.

The wicker chair creaked as it gave up its grasp on him, and Bran backed away uneasily, almost as if he sensed the evil deed that was to come.

Jonathan fumbled in his tackle-box and brought out a contri-

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vance of three triangle hooks and a brass spike. His fingers trembled just a little as he fastened on a stout wire trace and pushed a length of fine wire into his pocket.

He lifted his stout old greenheart rod, picked up Bobo, bowl and all, and walked down to the Bailiff's Pool. Bran followed slowly.

When he came to fix the little fish on the tackle, Jonathan found he could not bring himself to do the job in the way it should be done.

The brass spike should have been thrust down Bobo's gullet and the hooks lashed to his body with the wire. Instead, Jonathan lashed the spike along Bobo's flank, the goldfish flipping an outraged tail, and opening and closing his mouth in mute, aldermanic protest.

To himself, Jonathan made the excuse that by so doing, the fish would live the longer and thus be the better bait. But in his heart Jonathan knew that he did it for fear of what Marina would say.

He still had not accepted that she had gone. Perhaps Bobo was the sacrifice the Pike wanted. Perhaps it would accept Bobo and leave him Marina. But his mind was too confused to grasp that in this case the sacrifice was Marina's.

Almost before Bobo could realize the indignities he was suffering, he was lashed neatly to the spike, triangles were dangled from his tail and waist, and he was being lowered into the swift-running water at the head of the pool. And his requiem was: "Damn silly name for a fish!"

Jonathan could just see the golden glint of the little carp's body as it lashed its tail, trying to free itself of the encumbrance of the hooks and the drag of the line. Remorselessly the current carried it down until it was almost level with the willow tree. Then he checked the line, holding Bobo there, swimming right in front of the Pike's nose.

Not only human eyes find the glint of gold irresistible. Suddenly Bobo could be seen no more. The line began to tighten. Jonathan paid out more line, stripping it off the reel in quick, smooth pulls, letting it lie loose on the rippled surface so that the Pike should feel no drag.

Of no use to strike now while the Pike held Bobo suspiciously in his evil duck-bill rat-trap of a mouth. The hook might bite into those bony jaws, or it might not. Jonathan was going to set the hook in the Pike's belly, where all the powers of hell would not be able to drag it free.

And so he stood there, tense, waiting, counting out long seconds while the line snaked slowly downwards.

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One, and two, and three, and four, the seconds passed, like the striking hours of an old clock.

Jonathan struck.

Slowly the rod came back, bending the slightest bit as the line tightened. Then the butt went forward and the tip came back, and the slender timber arc bent like a reed as those vicious triangles tore into the delicate membranes of the Pike's belly. For a second it was as if the hook was fast in the bottom, for the rod bent and there was no movement in the line. Was it snagged round a root?

No—it was the Pike!

Now tears were shed upwards onto the weeping willow in a crystal fountain, as the Pike's beak broke the surface and all its long, striped length followed it into the air. No panic in that leap, no terror of a fish that knows its hour has come. Only the slow, majestic flight of a great fish that feels the time has come for exercise.

The big body hung in the air, and the brass wire of the trace gleamed from its mouth. Jonathan watched, so enthralled he hardly remembered to drop his rod-tip as the fish fell cascading back into the Pool.

Line screeched out as the Pike went down. Jonathan's thumb pressed on the reel's rim, slowing the fish's rush, showing it for the first time that the ache in its belly came not from food alone. Now the Pike fought.

Once and twice and again, it burst through the smooth surface of the Pool, shattering it with a flailing tail that sought to beat the line and break it.

But with each leap the rod-tip dipped, giving slack only to take it up as the fish sounded again.

Then came Jonathan's worst moments.

The fish cruised round the bottom, seeking a root or a rock to break the line. Through the vibrating rod, Jonathan felt the Pike's head shake angrily as the butt went down again, forcing the fish up, driving it away from the safety of the bottom, the security of its holes.

No tender trout outfit Jonathan used, but heavy cuttyhunk line and a wire trace that would, at a pinch, hold a moored boat. By brute force he dragged the Pike to the surface again, for a last display of aquabatics.

As the ripples died, Jonathan knew that the Pike was beaten. Once more it ringed the Pool, with its head shaking angrily. Then it was on its side, drifting feebly into the bank. The pale yellow belly and the dark green back kicked once, as the gaff went home.

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And then the Bailiff's Pool was without the Pike. The Serpent had been driven from the Garden.

But as it lay on the draining-board in the kitchen, the Pike was still alive. It was as long as a man's leg, and half the fish seemed to be jaw—jaw that could still bite. The yellow-rimmed, evil eyes, sited on bumps above the crown of the head, seemed to watch every movement of Jonathan's as he walked about the kitchen. The gill-covers rose and fell slowly, making a scraping sound on the scrubbed wood.

"Die, damn you," Jonathan muttered, and Bran whined in the corner.

But still it lived, the Pike, still the cruel, terrible eyes watched. Still the gill-covers rose and fell. It might live for hours, for it is tenacious of life, the pike. And Jonathan knew that he would go mad. For it was still not just a pike. It was the Devil and its cold eyes watched him from the pits of hell. Man cannot kill the Devil.

"Oh Lord," Jonathan prayed, "give me strength."

The eyes glared contempt at him.

Despised by a fish! But Jonathan's prayer was answered, for the strength suddenly came into him again, and he snatched up the potato beetle and pounded the Pike's head again and again, till the Pike lay inert, and limp, and dead.

The yellow-rimmed eyes were opaque now. No knowledge, no hatred, no contempt. Jonathan laughed for relief and for joy. "Sure, it's only a fish at the heels of the hunt. Only a fish, after all."

Brightness lit in his mind.

A skittering flip-flap came from the sink. Jonathan looked: there was Bobo, bulging eyes protesting at the lack of oxygen. He had been disgorged by the Pike and his fat little body seemed unharmed. He had been swallowed whole.

Tenderly Jonathan lifted the little fish and placed him in a half-filled bucket under the sink. In a moment he would go and bring the crystal bowl, but just for a little longer he wanted to look on the Pike.

As he looked he made a great resolve. "Never again," he muttered. "I'll fish no more."

He hefted the greenheart rod in his hand for the last time. Then it was over his knee. But before his weight fell on it, to shatter and splinter it, there was a movement behind him.

It was Marina. "Puncture," she said tonelessly. "You'll have to call me a taxi—" Then she saw what he was about to do to his rod.

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He was breaking it because of her, because she had gone. There was feeling in him after all. He loved her!

The ice melted from her voice. "No!" she said, laughter and tears mingling. "Don't break it. You'll need it . . . to teach your son."

The rod clattered to the floor, unheeded.

He took her and wrapped his arms around her, and life surged through them both.

"Oh!" she laughed, and everything was one between them, as her nose wrinkled. "Oh, you smell of fish."

★ ★ ★

SERVICES RENDERED

During my visits to this hospital I used to give the patients packets of cigarettes, each containing a stereotyped letter kindly printed for the occasion by a Liverpool firm whose manager had conceived the idea; he suggested that they would appreciate a letter even more than the cigarettes. As there were several hundreds of them I agreed to having the letter printed in facsimile; but to the ordinary eye it would look like a handwritten note addressed personally to each soldier.

This is what I wrote:

Empire Theatre, Liverpool.

My dear Lad, There is very little I can do for you in return for all that you have done for me, but I want you to know that I do that little with very great pleasure.

May God bless you and make you well quite soon.

Your friend,
Ada Reeve.

Some time later I heard from the wife of one of the recipients, who had evidently taken it for a personal communication:

Dear Madam, On goin throo my husbands pockets this morning i found this letter from you and i am not very well pleased.with it. wot as he done for you and wot ave you done for him, as i am is wife and think of inkwiring into it.

Yours truly,
Mrs. Smith.

I wrote back, saying: "Your husband has only done for me what he has done for thousands of other women." . . . I wonder what she made of that? . . .

ADA REEVE, *Take It for a Fact*

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A QUESTION OF FAITH

**To know truth is one thing
to prove it another**

by EDITH PARGETER

THE last train was due at 9.50, and the walk from the station to the prison gate took about a quarter of an hour. From the moment he heard the train whistling its way distantly round the curve, the Governor became a little distrait, and his replies to his friend's questions shrank to monosyllables. When the clock pushed an indifferent hand over the rim of ten, and caught its breath for the chime, he began to listen with an intent and sharply focused eagerness which made conversation impossible.

Wyndham sat back into silence, and watched him steadily for several minutes, but whatever it was he waited to hear, the night still did not provide it.

He was young to be in charge of a regional training prison, and in himself he was as much an experiment as the closed stone world he ruled. To be three years in office and still on trial is a tightrope act for any man to have to perform. The Governor showed the signs, Wyndham thought, studying him affectionately after two years of absence, in his too finely drawn thinness, the instant passion of his reactions to sound or movement, his burning weariness of eye.

No doubt they had argued, when he was appointed, that a young and enthusiastic man was needed for such a social revolution as this, a man with a vocation, as well as legal qualifications and academic honours. This kind of life ate men. The Governor was a keeper who fed himself daily to his animals, but like all sacramental meals, his substance remained inexhaustible.

The clock smoothed its face as complacently as a cat, and now it said a quarter past ten, and still the expected, whatever it was, did not happen. The Governor leaned back from the fireside chair to take the telephone from its cradle.

"Excuse me, won't you? One of my fellows was due in by that train. Hullo, Willetts! Has Bayford checked in yet?" His face mirrored the negative reply. "Yes, I heard it—it seemed to be well on time. He may have missed the connection at Lowbridge. No doubt he'll be in later on. No, we'll give him a few hours' grace. I'll call you."

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He hung up, and sat frowning into the fire for a moment under his tired eyelids.

"One of your home-leavers?" asked Wyndham.

"Yes. He has two months of a five-year sentence left to run, and he's been home on the usual ice-breaking trip. It saves them from dying of gate-fever—terror of not being wanted back, not finding any place waiting for them."

"Supposing one of them failed to report back?"

"No one ever has."

"What's the matter, then? Are you afraid this fellow might be the first?"

"Oh no, I've got absolute faith in him," said the Governor simply.

"It's a lucky man who can say that of his best friend! What's he like, this chap Bayford?"

"Oh, young . . . unlucky . . . unhappy . . . His case-history reads like a tract for the times. He's illegitimate, never knew his father. Mother was never much use to him. When he was three she got the county authorities to take the kid, and went more or less candidly on the streets. Married some miserably bad lot of her own calibre, and when Harry was in his last year of school and looked as if he might be profitable, they suddenly began taking an interest in him.

"You'd hardly credit," said the Governor, in detached tones which were belied by his shadowed eyes, "how easy it is for worthless parents to win their children back again. Every boy wants his mother; I suppose he'll go to quite a lot of trouble to shut his eyes to the suspicion that she might not be worth having. And he'd never been officially taken from her, she had only to claim him and he was hers. Only the boy himself could have saved himself—and then only if he'd been the most exceptional of boys. They lived on him, and neglected him, and knocked him about for three years, and by that time he could hardly keep his eyes shut any longer.

"So he looked for a bit of companionship and pleasure somewhere else, and found it in the wrong places, like so many others. At eighteen, he went to Borstal. He'd already been on probation, and made a mess of that. The magistrate went out of his way to lecture him about what the younger generation owes to its elders, and how it's letting them down . . ." A faint smile touched his lips at the thought.

"At twenty-one, he got five years for his share in a gang job. The only piece of luck he ever had was that the gun failed to go off, otherwise it might have been murder. Two years ago he was transferred to us."

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"And you think you've done well with him? He doesn't sound desperately promising material to me."

"He's earned full remission since he's been here. It's been hard going, but he was worth it."

The Governor recalled with a flash of intense pain the closed, inimical face, so young, so withdrawn, and the burning of the half-veiled eyes, terribly resigned yet more terribly vulnerable, which had confronted him at his first interview with Harry Bayford.

"He was intact morally, you see. He'd understood everything he did; there was a mind there to appeal to. All that was really necessary was to be utterly honest oneself—not always an easy thing to do."

"I'm not completely sold on this idea of agreeing with young thugs who plead that the whole world's against them." Wyndham softened his dissension with a smile, for they were old friends.

"He never pleaded anything. He just endured us. But the whole world *has* been against him, you know. I did what might have been the wrong thing with another man," confessed the Governor, "I grew fond of him. With Harry it was the right thing. It surprised him when he'd thought he was past surprise, and it disarmed him when he'd thought his armour was complete. Generosity is Harry's vice and virtue—he pays you back double whatever you offer him, whether it's trust or violence."

"Well, if you have absolute faith in him, what are you afraid of?"

The Governor did not attempt to deny the anxiety which filled him, but only looked up under his thin hand with a wry smile, and said: "To tell you the truth, I have not quite so absolute a trust in society as I have in Bayford."

"I can quite see," said Wyndham, laughing, "why you still have the twenty-foot wall. It's to defend your children from the world outside."

A quarter to eleven, and still nothing, no ringing of the telephone bell, no knock at the door, to break the tension of this waiting. Wyndham wondered if it was like this every time one of the prisoners went out to take his first distrustful look at the world again, and how, if it was, his friend's constitution could stand the strain. He wished a message would come soon, before the Governor disintegrated in front of his eyes.

"It would be a serious blow to you, apart from your concern for the boy himself, if he should fail to report back," he said sympathetically.

"There are plenty of people and organizations waiting for

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something like that to happen," admitted the Governor. "I doubt if one lapse could provide enough capital for them to damage us, but I'd rather not give them the chance to try."

He started up abruptly from his chair as the telephone rang, and scooped it from its cradle with an eagerness he did not attempt to disguise. "This will be him! Excuse me."

He identified himself briefly, and then sat listening, the relief in his face stiffening into a new and grave anxiety.

He was silent for several minutes with the receiver at his ear, and then he said sharply: "Please hold everything until I get over there myself. Yes, I'll come at once. I should appreciate it very much if you'll let me talk to him."

Wyndham was on his feet and at his friend's elbow as he pressed down the rest and held it there for a minute. "What's happened? Not an accident?"

"No. No accident." He lifted the receiver again. "Get my car out at once, please. I shall be away a couple of hours or so. No, thanks, I'm driving myself."

And to Wyndham he continued, as he hung up once more, "The police picked him up for house-breaking at Hampton's Corner, about an hour ago. Householder caught him on the premises, apparently. He's gone to earth inside himself, and won't say anything. I've got to go."

"But, my dear chap, what can you do about it? If he's let you down like that . . ."

"I'm not convinced that he has. That's why I've got to go."

"But Hampton's Corner—that isn't on his way here from Lowbridge at all, it's on the Stapleton road. And if he was actually caught in the house—"

"Yes, all that! The place is ten miles out of his way; the police are sure of their man. Only, I'm sure of my man, too! But even if I believed we'd got all the facts, I should still have to go. Look, don't wait up for me, old man, I may be some time. I'm sorry your first night here had to be broken up like this."

"Like me to come with you?" offered Wyndham, out of sheer unwillingness to see him drive off alone with his bitter disappointment.

"That's uncommonly kind of you, Tom, but no, thanks, I'd better go alone. Wish me luck!"

But so far as belief in his luck was concerned, he knew that his friend's wish was fruitless. And as he slid behind the wheel of the big car and drove it out through the slowly unfolding gates in the high wall, he knew that he was the one creature in the world who believed in Harry Bayford's innocence of all intent to offend. His loneliness did not frighten him; he was used to

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being alone. No wife, no family, no hierarchies of friends; he belonged to his vocation more exclusively, more rigidly than any monastic to his cloister.

In his anxiety to have all the details, to confront and confute them, he drove at considerably more than thirty, even through the town. Speed was terribly important, for he was like a vital witness trying to forestall an execution; all he knew was that Harry Bayford, whatever his past record, would not, for any inducement which could have been offered him, have committed a crime this night. But he knew that so well that it was all the evidence he needed. Others, the sceptical Stapleton police, for instance, who did not love the new prison methods, would need a great deal more convincing.

The little town was half sleeping already, but within the police-station there was a bright, gratified wakefulness. They were waiting for him, they ushered him in at once to the Superintendent, who tempered the triumph of his smile with a sympathetic regret, so far as he was able, and told him the whole story.

"It's a large house right on the corner there, where the lane from the junction comes out onto the high road. The constable going off duty was cycling by the gates when he heard somebody blowing a police-whistle, and he dived back and in at the gate just in time to see this fellow Bayford vaulting out of a ground-floor window, left of the front door—it's the living-room. The lights were on in the room, and the householder—he's our local bank manager, name of Simpson—came to the window after him, still blowing away for help. Our man collared Bayford, and between them they got him back into the house.

"This was just about ten o'clock, according to the constable. Simpson says he was just putting on a kettle in the kitchen, which is at the back of the house, and waiting for his wife to come home from a bridge party at a friend's, up the road, and when it struck ten, he thought he'd stroll along and meet her—it's only a hundred yards or so. As he came through the hall, he heard somebody moving about softly in the living-room in the dark, and having his suspicions, he went and got the whistle before he crashed into the room and switched the lights on.

"Bayford was at the bureau, but as soon as the lights went on, he streaked for the window, which was open. Obviously, he got in that way. That's all. Nothing missing, so far as Simpson's been able to judge yet—seems he was interrupted too soon."

The Governor, balancing his hat with absent care upon his crossed knees, asked in a mild tone, "And what does Bayford say?"

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"Hardly a word. At first he did babble that he wasn't stealing, that he hadn't taken anything, but by the time they got him inside again he'd turned dumb and sulky. All he'll say now is what's the use, nobody's going to believe him. He's made up his mind he's had it, you know, sir. I'm sorry, this is a bad let-down for you. We got his name and record from the papers and letters he had on him, and that's why we got on to you. But he won't add anything. We've been trying to get him to tell his side of it for half an hour now."

The Governor nodded resigned understanding of this silence.

"I appreciate your calling me, and letting me butt in like this. I'd like to ask you to try and keep an open mind about Bayford. That's all I am asking. I don't expect you to take my word for it that if he says he wasn't there to steal, he's telling you the simple truth. But I will ask you to take my word for it that if he says that to me, *I* shall believe it. And I'll ask you to do us both the justice of assuming that I have solid reasons for feeling so sure of him. I've known him intimately for two years now, and what I feel about him is the result of experience, not sentiment."

"That's understood, sir. I respect your evidence, and in turn you'll realize that I have my duty to do, on the facts as I know them."

"Good! Would it be in order for me to talk to him alone?"

"Certainly, if you think it's any good. He's in the next room."

"But first," said the Governor, checking at the door, "may I point out one thing? This boy was on his way back to us after a five-day home leave. He should have caught the connection at Lowbridge at 9.25, and by his being here at all he must have fulfilled his bargain up to that point. When he didn't arrive, I assumed—as I'm still assuming—that he missed that connection. Now he turns up here, ten miles out of his way, by your reckoning, but by mine, on the nearest point on the road between Stapleton and Mordenfield. There's a bus from Stapleton at 9.45. My estimate is that when he missed his train he begged a lift on the first car he saw heading in the direction of the Stapleton road, to try and catch that bus."

"It would make a good story," agreed the Superintendent, solidly entrenched against believing in it.

"In which case, it should be possible to trace the car."

"If he'll give us a description, we'll try. But I'm afraid he's going to need more than that."

"That's evidently what he thinks, too," said the Governor, and went into the room where the boy was.

His heart chilled with dismay at the sight of him. He was

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sitting compactly and resignedly upon an upright chair, his feet planted neatly together, his hands clenched tightly upon the brim of the new trilby in his lap, his eyes roving, with narrowed, stoical despair, from the constable who kept him company, to the window and the door. These were not possible means of escape to him now, they were tunnels to the other, the forfeited world.

He had receded far down the subterranean passage from freedom to the dark anonymity out of which he had been coaxed with so much pain, and so extraordinary a delight, during the last two years. The thin, intense face, lately wildly responsive to every recognition, had congealed into a formal mask of withdrawal and loneliness, as though he defied anyone ever to touch him again; but the alert eyes were frenzied with despair.

Even when he saw the Governor enter, his expression did not change; only the eyes fixed on the newcomer hopelessly, almost indifferently, as though from a great distance.

This was the very face they had seen turned upon them when first he came to Mordenfield. Could everything be undone in one hour, like this?

The constable looked over the Governor's shoulder at the Superintendent's face, and got up and went out, closing the door after him.

The Governor said, "Hullo, Harry." He had never called him that before, and after tonight he probably never would again, but there is a time for everything, and now it seemed so inevitable that he did not even notice it. "You'd better tell me all about it," he said. "I'd tell you some of it myself, but they might not like it that way round, so you tell me."

The boy said in a slightly lame voice, as though the effort of silence had already partly disabled him from speech: "I bet they've told you all that matters to them. I got picked up in a house where I'd no right to be. What more do you want?"

The Governor lifted a chair, and set it opposite to the one on which Harry sat. When he found himself compelled to meet someone else's eyes so closely, the boy turned his head away, but the gesture, instead of being defiant, was indescribably revealing, and more like a convulsion of pain than a gesture of rejection.

"I want to know *why* you went in there," said the Governor. "I could make a guess, but they wouldn't be interested in my guesses. So you tell me—Why did you go into the house? Because, of course, it wasn't to steal."

The head turned again, abruptly, the eyes flared wide. "I haven't said it wasn't, have I?" His thin hands, nervous as a girl's, tightened violently on the brim of the hat.

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"You don't have to say it. I know it."

"You think you can kid me with a confidence trick like that?" said the boy unpleasantly. "I've had all that once. I'm over it."

But he began to shake, and had to dig his heels into the floor and his teeth into his lip to suppress the weakness.

The Governor didn't argue. He said instead: "You missed your connection at Lowbridge, and went up the lane to see if you could hop a car to Hampton's Corner, to try and catch the bus. I don't suppose you made a note of the number—why should you?—but you could describe the car and the driver. It should be possible to find him, and the station staff will be able to confirm how you missed your train. All right, so we've got you to Hampton's Corner. The bus had beaten you to it, after all, and you were still eight miles from home."

The boy had begun to breathe hard, and the frozen calm of his face was shaken with painful tremors of hope.

"It wasn't a car, it was a van. A bloke from the beet factory —they work all night in the season."

"Better still! Finding the man will be easy, now we know just where to look. Go on from there, then. You were eight miles from home, and getting worried, because it was getting round to the time when we should be expecting you, and you didn't want us to think you'd welshed on us—"

Harry shut his eyes, and rolled his head back as if from a punch. "What's the use? They won't believe me! Nobody'll ever believe me! I could have told them, but what the hell's the good? Let me alone, can't you? I was all set to take it, and you come beggaring in here and unwind me—"

"You wanted us to know," said the Governor patiently, as if there had been no interruption, "that you were on your way, before you walked the eight miles, or hitched a lift if you were lucky. You're making me tell it all for you, Harry. You might make just a small contribution yourself."

The thin hands came up and clutched the short dark hair at the temples, and out of the trembling mouth speech came pouring in jerks and recoveries, like arterial blood.

"I wanted to phone you, and tell you why I was late—and that I was coming as quick as I could. There's no call-box all along that road, and anyhow, I didn't have any coppers. I saw the phone wires went to that house, so I went up to the door and rang the bell, to ask if I could use their line—but nobody answered, and there was this room, with the curtains not drawn, and a bit of fire still in—and I could see the phone in there on top of the bureau. I tried the window—I know it was daft, I wish I'd never touched it, but I did—and it went up, and I thought,

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it'll only take me a minute, so I shinned over the sill and went and started to dial. I know I shouldn't have gone in—but it looked so easy, and there was nowhere else to ring from, and I thought for sure there was nobody in. They never answered the door, and all the front lights was off.

"But I no sooner got a couple of numbers dialled when I heard him in the hall, and I put the phone back, quick, and stood still, hoping he'd go away. The next minute he was in on me, whistling like mad, and the lights all on, and—and I run for it. With my record, what else could I do but run? Nobody's going to believe *that* for a tale—not from me!"

Listening to him bleed, himself weak with an exquisite, singing relief, the Governor thought: "Now it's up to me to get him out of this!"

And he found time, between the pulsations of his gratitude, to be deeply afraid; for it was certainly he who had stripped the boy's armour of loneliness from him, and unless something better could be put in its place he might die of the cold.

To know truth when you hear it is one thing, to prove it to the police quite another. And what evidence had he to offer, except the station staff at Lowbridge, and the van-driver, though the latter was certainly a godsend? He prayed that Harry might have talked about himself to this chance acquaintance in the dark, but he knew how unlikely that was.

No, it was up to him to put out his hand, and pluck proof out of the air. If one has faith enough, it ought to be possible, and he had claimed an absolute faith. His mind began to read over, word for word, all the things Harry had told him, looking with particular industry for the minute revelations he did not know he had made.

"You must repeat all that to the Superintendent, just as you've told it to me."

"What's the use? There's nobody to bear me out, after I got out of the van. And *he* doesn't know but what I come there just to lift whatever was lying around."

"You'll tell him, all the same. Do as I ask you. You know you can rely on me." He did not add, but he knew that Harry heard: "As I knew I could rely on you."

"I am promising him a miracle," he thought to himself, "and he believes me. And now I have got to produce one."

He went to the door, and opened it. The Superintendent looked up knowingly from his desk, rather surprised, even rather disappointed, that the enthusiast should have given up so soon.

"I wonder if you would hear Bayford's story now? He's ready to tell it."

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The boy went through it again almost word for word, his eyes returning always to the Governor's face, and resting there with such trust and such terror that it seemed altogether too much for one man to carry.

" We'll certainly make inquiries for the driver of the factory van," said the Superintendent at the end of the recital. " For the rest of the story, it holds together, but you'll allow there's been time for thinking it out, and I should have been more impressed if it had been told immediately. It's a pity there can't be independent confirmation. I'm sure you accept it, sir, and I take it for granted you're in good faith in urging it upon me. But I have to deal with evidence, and you'll agree there's very little possibility of finding any to support this version of what happened."

The Governor said, aware of the eyes which held fast to him as to life: " I think I can supply you with two pieces of evidence which will go a very long way towards confirming Bayford's story. I start with the advantage, you see, of having no doubts at all about his honesty in the matter, so I can explore the details of what he's told us even more closely than he can, in his present state. You know this man Simpson? He isn't, by any chance, deaf? "

" Good lord, no! " said the Superintendent, astonished. " He hears as well as any of us."

" And he was in the house when it was entered, so he must have been there when Harry rang the bell. Make no mistake, if he says he rang the bell and got no answer, that's exactly what happened. I don't expect you to be sure of it, but *I* am sure. Therefore I think it very probable that you can tell Mr. Simpson something he doesn't know about his own house. The front-door bell is out of order. At least you can send a constable round to test it, can't you? "

The Superintendent gave him a long look of mingled patience and derision. " We can settle it from here. I'll ring up Simpson, and ask him."

" But I'd rather the constable went and did it himself—with all respect to Mr. Simpson, but in fairness to Bayford. And at the same time, would you ask him to look into something else there? Knowing Bayford as I do, I know something he hasn't even remembered to tell us. He says he went into the room to telephone, and had already begun to dial when he was interrupted. It didn't occur to him to say that he fully intended to pay for his call, but I tell you so for him—"

The boy's face had suddenly softened and flushed into a wild relief.

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He opened his lips with a gasp, but the Governor restrained him with a quick pressure of his hand upon the tight fingers that clutched the new hat.

"If he had already begun to dial his number, he had already paid. The price of a call from Hampton's Corner to Mordenfield is fivepence. Somewhere in that room, unless he had time to pick them up again as he ran for it—which I very much doubt—your constable will find five pennies."

"Sixpence!" stammered the boy, faint and sick with eagerness. "I didn't have no coppers, it was a sixpence. I put it inside the top drawer of the bureau, and I never thought about it afterwards."

He clamped his knees hard together and clenched his hands, to prevent himself from trembling all over.

"If your constable finds the bell out of action, and the sixpence in the drawer, Superintendent—"

"If he does," said the Superintendent, politely tempering his incredulity, "it looks as if we shan't have to detain Bayford any longer. That would be clear enough."

He rose and went out, and they waited in silence, without looking at each other, because there was nothing they had to look for with any uncertainty, it was only other people they had to fear now, and ungentle circumstances.

The Superintendent came back into the room, and sat down again at his desk, staring at the telephone. And once, when the silence had lasted almost ten minutes, he looked up suddenly into the Governor's eyes, and seemed about to ask him something, but thought better of it.

It seemed to him criminal recklessness to go about the world staking your life on other people, like this, but it was none of his business, and the bubble was due to burst any moment, without any pricks from him.

The telephone rang.

They sat breathlessly still, watching and listening as the confident hand lifted it, and the sceptical voice said: "Well, what results?"

Then there was a silence. "All right," said the Superintendent flatly, "that's all, you can come on back now."

He laid the telephone resentfully in its cradle; it offended him to see the probabilities disarranged.

"Well, I should have lost my money! The bell doesn't ring. The sixpence was in the drawer. Bayford, you'll probably never know what a lucky lad you are!"

The boy sat with his eyes closed, and the colour ebbing and

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flowing in his thin cheeks, and all the lines of his body growing languid and eased.

When he opened his eyes, the Governor was leaning over him, smiling, a hand under his forearm to lift him gently out of the chair.

"Come on, Harry! We're going home."

★ ★ ★

PRIVATE EYE

For connoisseurs of crime! — You are summoned to an identification parade, not of criminals but of sleuths. Acting on information received, can you pick out the wanted persons?
Count one point for recognizing the detective and one for the author, making a total of sixteen. A feather in your deerstalker if you can recall any of the titles of the stories in which they appear.

The answers are on page 87.

1. *A holy terror, as far as the underworld is concerned, but he appears as a knight errant to maidens in distress.*

2. *Skinny, saurian, and delighting to dress in knitwear of the most garish and ill-combined hues, this elderly consulting psychiatrist has pointed an accusing, clawlike finger at many a disconcerted suspect.*

3. *Death is the middle name of this Eton-and-Balliol author of "Notes on the Collecting of Incunabula."*

4. *His look of inane good temper has misled many international crooks when it comes to the final count, as Algy and the rest of the chaps could tell you.*

5. *Tiens, he is formidable, that one! Those little grey cells must work overtime.*

6. *The raffish aspect of the unreliable red sports car, Lily Christine, is matched by the colourfully unorthodox appearance of her owner, who, mirabile dictu, graces a chair of English Language and Literature at Oxford.*

7. *Described by his friend Stanislaus as a "nicely-spoken little gent in horn-rimmed spectacles," he modestly conceals his aristocratic connections behind a botanical nom de guerre.*

8. *The Old Man himself, barrel-shaped and irascible, much given to smokin' cigars and utterin' outlandish oaths.*

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SUN AND SHADOW

"Stand there if you want to," said the photographer

by RAY BRADBURY

THE camera clicked like an insect. It was blue and metallic, like a great fat beetle held in the man's precious and tenderly exploiting hands. It winked in the flashing sunlight.

"Psst, Ricardo, come away!"

"You, down there!" cried Ricardo out of the window.

"Ricardo, stop!"

He turned to his wife. "Don't tell me to stop, tell them to stop. Go down and tell them, or are you afraid?"

"They aren't hurting anything," said his wife patiently.

He shook her off and leaned out of the window and looked down into the alley. "You, there!" he cried.

The man with the black camera in the alley glanced up, then went on focusing his machine at the lady in the salt-white beach shorts, the white bra, and the green checkered scarf. She leaned against the cracked plaster of the building. Behind her, a dark boy smiled, his hand to his mouth.

"Tomás!" yelled Ricardo. He turned to his wife. "Oh, heavens above, Tomás is in the street, my own son laughing there." Ricardo started out of the door.

"Don't do anything!" said his wife.

"I'll cut off their heads!" said Ricardo, and was gone.

In the street the lazy woman was lounging now against the peeling blue paint of a banister. Ricardo emerged in time to see her doing this. "That's my banister!" he said.

The cameraman hurried up. "No, no, we're taking pictures. Everything's all right. We'll be moving on."

"Everything's not all right," said Ricardo, his brown eyes flashing. He waved a wrinkled hand. "She's leaning on my house."

"We're taking fashion pictures," smiled the photographer.

"Now what am I to do?" said Ricardo to the blue sky. "Go mad with this news? Dance around like an epileptic saint?"

"If it's money, well, here's a five-peso bill," smiled the photographer. Ricardo pushed the hand away. "I *work* for my money. You don't understand. Please go."

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The photographer was bewildered. "Wait . . ."

"Tomás, get in the house!"

"But, Papa . . ."

"Gahh!" bellowed Ricardo.

The boy vanished.

"This has never happened before," said the photographer.

"It is more than time it did! What are we? Cowards?" Ricardo asked the world.

A crowd was gathering. They murmured and smiled and nudged each other's elbows.

The photographer with irritable goodwill snapped his camera shut, said over his shoulder to the model, "All right, we'll use that other street. I saw a nice cracked wall there and some nice deep shadows. If we hurry . . ."

The girl, who had stood during this exchange nervously twisting her scarf, now seized her make-up kit and darted by Ricardo, but not before he touched her arm.

"Do not misunderstand," he said quickly. She stopped, blinked at him. He went on, "It is not you I am mad at. Or you." He addressed the photographer.

"Then why—?" said the photographer.

Ricardo waved his hand. "You are employed; I am employed. We are all people employed. We must understand each other. But when you come to my house with your camera that looks like the complex eye of a black horsefly, then the understanding is over. I will not have my alley used because of its pretty shadows, or my sky used because of its sun, or my house used because there is an interesting crack in the wall, here! You see! Ah, how beautiful! Lean here! Stand there! Sit here! Crouch there! Hold it! Oh, I heard you. Do you think I am stupid? I have books up in my room. You see that window? Maria!"

His wife's head popped out. "Show them my books!" he cried.

She fussed and muttered, but a moment later she held out one, then two, then half a dozen books, eyes shut, head turned away, as if they were old fish.

"And two dozen more like them upstairs!" cried Ricardo. "You're not talking to some cow in the forest, you're talking to a man!"

"Look," said the photographer, packing his plates swiftly. "We're going. Thanks for nothing."

"Before you go, you must see what I am getting at," said Ricardo. "I am not a mean man. But I *can* be a very angry man. Do I look like a cardboard cut-out?"

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"Nobody said anybody looked like anything." The photographer hefted his case and started off.

"There is a photographer two blocks over," said Ricardo, pacing him. "They have cut-outs. You stand in front of them. One says GRAND HOTEL. They take a picture of you and it looks as if you are in the Grand Hotel. Do you see what I mean? My alley is my alley, my life is my life, my son is my son. My son is not cardboard! I saw you putting my son against the wall, so, like this, in the background. What do you call it—for the correct air? To make the whole attractive, and the lovely lady in front of him?"

"It's getting late," said the photographer, sweating. The model trotted along on the other side of him.

"We are poor people," said Ricardo. "Our doors peel paint, our walls are chipped and cracked, our gutters fume in the street, the alleys are all cobbles. But it fills me with a terrible rage when I see you make over these things as if I had planned it this way, as if I had years ago induced the wall to crack. Did you think I knew you were coming and aged the paint? Or that I knew you were coming and put my boy in his dirtiest clothes? We are not a studio! We are people and must be given attention as people. Have I made it clear?"

"With abundant detail," said the photographer, not looking at him, hurrying.

"Now that you know my wishes and my reasoning, you will do the friendly thing and go home?"

"You are a funny guy," said the photographer. "Hey!" They had joined a group of five other models and a second photographer at the base of a vast stone stairway which in layers, like a bridal cake, led up to the white town square. "How are you doing, Joe?"

"We got some beautiful shots near the Church of the Virgin, some statuary without any noses, lovely stuff," said Joe. "What's the commotion?"

"Pancho here got in an uproar. Seems we leaned against his house and knocked it down."

"My name is Ricardo. My house is completely intact."

"We'll shoot it here, dear," said the first photographer. "Stand by the archway of that shop. There's a nice antique wall going up there." He peered into the mysteries of his camera.

"So!" A dreadful quiet came upon Ricardo. He watched them prepare. When they were ready to take the picture he hurried forward, calling to a man in a doorway, "Jorge! What are you doing?"

"I'm standing here," said the man.

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"Well," said Ricardo, "isn't that *your* archway? Are you going to let them use it?"

"I'm not bothered," said Jorge.

Ricardo shook his arm. "They're treating your property like a stage set. Aren't you insulted?"

"I haven't thought about it." Jorge rubbed his nose.

"For heaven's sake, man, think!"

"I can't see any harm," said Jorge.

"Am I the only one in the world with a tongue in my mouth?" said Ricardo to his empty hands. "And taste on my tongue? Is this a town of backdrops and picture sets? Won't anyone do something about this except me?"

The crowd had followed them down the street, gathering others to it as it came; now it was of a fair size and more were coming, drawn by Ricardo's bullish shouts. He stamped his feet. He clenched his fists. He spat. The cameraman and the models watched him nervously.

"Do you want a quaint man in the background?" he said wildly to the cameraman. "I'll pose back here. Do you want me near this wall, my hat so, my feet so, the light so on my sandals which I made myself? Do you want me to rip this hole in my shirt a bit larger, eh, like this? *So!* Is my face smeared with enough perspiration? Is my hair long enough, kind sir?"

"Stand there if you want to," said the photographer.

"I won't look in the camera," Ricardo assured him.

The photographer smiled and lifted his machine. "Over to your left one step, dear."

The model moved.

"Now turn your right leg. That's fine. Fine, fine. Hold it!"

The model froze, chin tilted up.

Ricardo dropped his pants.

"Oh lord above!" said the photographer.

Some of the models squealed. The crowd laughed and pummelled each other a bit. Ricardo quietly raised his pants and leaned against the wall.

"Was that quaint enough?" he said.

"Oh lord!" muttered the photographer.

"Let's go down to the docks," said his assistant.

"I think *I'll* go there too," Ricardo smiled.

"What can we do with the idiot?" whispered the photographer.

"Buy him off!"

"I tried that!"

"You didn't go high enough."

"Listen, you run and get a policeman. I'll put a stop to this."

The assistant ran. Everyone stood around, smoking cigarettes

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nervously, eyeing Ricardo. A dog came by and briefly made water against the wall.

"Look at that!" cried Ricardo. "What art! What a pattern! Quick, before the sun dries it!"

The cameraman turned his back and looked out to sea.

The assistant came rushing along the street. Behind him, a native policeman strolled quietly. The assistant had to stop and run back to urge the policeman to hurry.

The policeman assured him with a gesture, at a distance, that the day was not yet over and in time they would arrive at the scene of whatever disaster lay ahead.

The policeman took up a position behind the two cameramen. "What seems to be the trouble?"

"That man up there. We want him removed."

"That man up there seems only to be leaning against a wall," said the officer.

"No, no, it's not the leaning, he—Oh hell!" said the cameraman. "The only way to explain is to show you. Take your pose, dear."

The girl posed. Ricardo posed, smiling casually.

"Hold it!"

The girl froze.

Ricardo dropped his pants.

Click went the camera.

"Ah," said the policeman.

"Got the evidence right in this old camera if you need it!" said the cameraman.

"Ah," said the policeman, not moving, hand to chin. "So."

He surveyed the scene like an amateur photographer himself. He saw the model with the flushed, nervous, marble face, the cobbles, the wall, and Ricardo. Ricardo magnificently smoking a cigarette, there in the noon sunlight under the blue sky, his pants where a man's pants rarely are.

"Well, officer?" said the cameraman, waiting.

"Just what," said the policeman, taking off his cap and wiping his dark brow, "do you want me to do?"

"Arrest that man! Indecent exposure!"

"Ah," said the policeman.

"Well?" said the cameraman.

The crowd murmured. All the nice lady models were looking out at the sea-gulls and the ocean.

"That man up there against the wall," said the officer, "I know him. His name is Ricardo Reyes."

"Hullo, Esteban!" called Ricardo.

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The officer called back at him, "Hullo, Ricardo." They waved at each other.

"He's not doing anything I can see," said the officer.

"What do you mean?" asked the cameraman. "He's as naked as a rock. It's immoral!"

"That man is doing nothing immoral. He's just standing there," said the policeman. "Now if he were *doing* something with his hands or body, something terrible to view, I would act upon the instant. However, since he is simply leaning against the wall, not moving a single limb or muscle, there is nothing wrong."

"He's naked, *naked*!" screamed the cameraman.

"I don't understand." The officer blinked.

"You just don't go around naked, that's all!"

"There are naked people and naked people," said the officer. "Good and bad. Sober and with drink in them. I judge this one to be a man with no drink in him, a good man by reputation; naked, yes, but doing nothing with this nakedness in any way to offend the community."

"What are you, his brother? What are you, his confederate?" said the cameraman. It seemed that at any moment he might snap and bite and bark and woof and race round in circles under the blazing sun. "Where's the justice? What's going *on* here? Come on, girls, we'll go somewhere else!"

"France," said Ricardo.

"What?" The photographer whirled.

"I said France, or Spain," suggested Ricardo. "Or Sweden. I have seen some nice pictures of walls in Sweden. But not many cracks in them. Forgive my suggestion."

"We'll get pictures in spite of you!" The cameraman shook his camera, his fist.

"I will be there," said Ricardo. "Tomorrow, the next day, at the bullfights, at the market, anywhere, everywhere you go I go, quietly, with grace. With dignity, to perform my necessary task." Looking at him, they knew it was true.

"Who are you—who on earth do you think you are?" cried the photographer.

"I have been waiting for you to ask me," said Ricardo. "Consider me. Go home and think of me. As long as there is one man like me in a town of ten thousand, the world will go on. Without me, all would be chaos."

"Good night, nurse," said the photographer, and the entire swarm of ladies, hatboxes, cameras, and make-up kits retreated down the street toward the docks. "Time out for lunch, dears. We'll think up something later!"

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Ricardo watched them go, quietly. He had not moved from his position. The crowd still looked upon him and smiled.

Now, Ricardo thought, I shall walk up the street to my house, which has paint peeling from the door where I have brushed it a thousand times in passing, and I shall walk over the stones I have worn down in forty-six years of walking, and I shall run my hand over the crack in the wall of my own house, which is the crack made by the earthquake in 1930.

I remember the night well, us all in bed, Tomás as yet unborn, and Maria and I much in love, and thinking it was our love which moved the house, warm and great in the night; but it was the earth trembling, and in the morning, that crack in the wall.

And I shall climb the steps to the lacework-grille balcony of my father's house, which he made with his own hands, and I shall eat the food my wife serves me on the balcony, with the books near at hand. And my son Tomás, whom I created out of whole cloth—yes, bed sheets, let us admit it—with my good wife. And we shall sit eating and talking, not photographs, not backdrops, not paintings, not stage furniture, any of us. But actors, all of us, very fine actors indeed.

As if to second this last thought, a sound startled his ear. He was in the midst of solemnly, with great dignity and grace, lifting his pants to belt them round his waist, when he heard this lovely sound. It was like the winging of soft doves in the air. It was applause.

The small crowd, looking up at him, enacting the final scene of the play before the intermission for lunch, saw with what beauty and gentlemanly decorum he was elevating his trousers. The applause broke like a brief wave upon the shore of the nearby sea.

Ricardo gestured and smiled to them all.

On his way home up the hill, he shook hands with the dog that had watered the wall.

* * *

WINTER SCENE

Frail as a painting on a Chinese screen
The winter trees are brushed against the sky,
And where the moonstone glimmer of the light
Has dimmed the twilight hours before they die,
Transmuting barns and leaves and fields,
The grasses stand out palely blue,
Caught in a hoop of immobility,
A dreamlike dusk that filters through.

MARJORIE BATTCOCK

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BELLE, BOOK, AND CANDLE

A progeny of learning!

R. B. SHERIDAN, *The Rivals*

Blanche is looking well and as far as I can see perfectly happy, she seems fond of her husband who is also very attentive to her, and if at times she may appear to be low it proceeds, I suspect, from a lack a daisical sort of mooniness produced by reading incomprehensible poetry.

EDWARD, *2nd* LORD STANLEY OF ALDERLEY,
in a letter, August, 1852, from
The Stanleys of Alderley

Married to her Art

'Tis pity learned virgins ever wed
With persons of no sort of education,
Or gentlemen, who, though well-born and bred,
Grow tired of scientific conversation:
I don't choose to say much upon this head,
I'm a plain man, and in a single station,
But—Oh! ye lords of ladies intellectual,
Inform us truly, have they not hen-peck'd you all?

LORD BYRON, *Don Juan*

Strong Stuff

"Have you fixed up Grace Gillstow yet, Mrs. Chilleywater?" Lord Tiredstock's third son asked.

"She shall marry Baldwin: but not before she has been seduced first by Barnaby . . ."

"What are you talking about?" the Hon. "Eddy" queried.

"Of Mrs. Chilleywater's forthcoming book."

"Why should Barnaby get Grace—? Why not Tex?"

But Mrs. Chilleywater refused to enter into reasons.

"She is looking for cowslips," she said, "and oh I've such a wonderful description of a field of cowslips . . . They make a darling setting for a powerful scene of lust."

"So Grace loses her virtue!" Lord Tiredstock's third son exclaimed . . .

"Life is like that, dear," the Ambassadress blandly observed.

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" It ought not to be, Lady Something! " Mrs. Chilleywater looked vindictive.

Née Victoria Gellybore Frinton, and the sole heir of Lord Seafairer of Sevenelms, Kent, Mrs. Harold Chilleywater, since her marriage " for Love," had developed a disconcerting taste for fiction—a taste that was regarded at the Foreign Office with disapproving forbearance . . . So far her efforts (written under her maiden name in full with her husband's as well appended) had been confined to lurid studies of low life (of which she knew nothing at all); but the Hon. Harold Chilleywater had been gently warned that if he was not to remain at Kairoulla until the close of his career the style of his wife must really grow less *virile.*

RONALD FIRBANK, *The Flower Beneath the Foot*

Small Talk

Dark was her hair, her hand was white;
Her voice was exquisitely tender;
Her eyes were full of liquid light;
I never saw a waist so slender!
Her every look, her every smile,
Shot right and left a score of arrows;
I thought 'twas Venus from her isle,
And wonder'd where she'd left her sparrows.

She talk'd—of politics or prayers—
Or Southey's prose, or Wordsworth's sonnets,
Of danglers—or of dancing bears,
Of battles—or the last new bonnets,
By candlelight, at twelve o'clock,
To me it matter'd not a tittle;
If those bright lips had quoted Locke,
I might have thought they murmur'd Little.

W. M. PRAED, *The Belle of the Ballroom*

Close-cropped

" All right, sir," answered the sergeant, calming down. " But I still say that this Mrs. Bradley can bear a lot of watching. Scalp the very hair off your head, and then argue you into thinking you'd look better, anyway, in a wig, she would," he concluded, " if it suited her book to do it. I don't trust brains in ladies."

GLADYS MITCHELL, *Here Comes a Chopper*

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Critical Period

I was the one he set most store by, and I was still quite small when he began to appeal to my critical sense. Later on, thank goodness, I proved less precocious, but I well remember how severe a judge I was at ten years old.

"Listen to this," my father would say, and I would listen, very sternly. Perhaps it would be a purple passage of oratorical prose, or an ode in flowing verse, with a great parade of rhythm and rhyme, resounding as a mountain storm.

"Well?" my father would ask. "I really believe that this time . . . Go on, say!"

I would toss my head with its fair plaits, a forehead too high to look amiable, and a little marble of a chin, and let fall my censure: "Too many adjectives, as usual!"

COLETTE, *Sido*

Friendly Accent

Her books, a like mixture, are so very clever,
The god himself swore he could read them for ever;
Plot, character, freakishness, all are so good;
And the heroine's herself playing tricks in a hood.
So he kiss'd her, and called her "eternal good wench;"
But asked, Why the devil she spoke so much French?

DR. MAGINN, 1793-1842. *Lady Morgan*

Blue Stocking

It makes my head ache to see Con reading, reading all day. Betty seems to think it is a far more intellectual employment than darning stockings, and says that for that reason Con should be encouraged in it. If she lived with Con she would not say so. While you are darning stockings, your mind is at least free, and your thoughts may be on the grandest subjects. Also you can talk and be agreeable while darning. But surely there can be nothing intellectual in passing your whole day and most of the night in the study of trashy words, which prevent all thought upon higher subjects. I can imagine nothing more intellectually lowering, not to mention that as a companion she becomes intolerable. If she sits in the same room you may not speak to her, and generally she sits alone. I sometimes feel positively wild with rage it maddens me so.

LADY EMILY LUTYENS,
A Blessed Girl

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ABOUT THE IGNORMUS

Nobody had ever seen it by daylight before

by WALTER BROOKS

I GUESS it was the second summer Hubert and Enid spent in Aeschylus Centre that they heard about the Ignormus. Hubert and Enid are those two sparrows I told you about. It was well on, late in the summer, and they were experiencing that let-down that always comes after the children have learnt to fly and have struck out for themselves.

It wasn't so much that they missed the children. Family feeling in birds seldom survives childhood—an arrangement which has its brighter side. But life just seemed uninteresting and rather empty, like a room too sparsely furnished. So Enid decided to redecorate the nest.

She got various materials and tried them out, and Hubert helped her as best he could, though, of course, Enid, being a female, considered his taste rather crude.

One day when he had been to the baseball game he came back with a strand of red wool from Hymie Link's sweater. (Hymie was the Aeschylus Centre shortstop.) Enid laughed and said apparently a man's idea of decorating a house was to fill it with a lot of trophies.

But she admitted the wool was a nice colour, and she wove it round the rim of the nest.

"Now," she said, "if you could get me some silk from some milkweed pods I could make a lovely decorative border."

Hubert asked the phoebe who lived next door where he could get milkweed silk.

"Well, I don't know," said the phoebe. "Most of the pods haven't burst yet except over in the pasture beyond Carver's Woods, and you wouldn't want to go there."

"Why not?" said Hubert. "It's only a ten minutes' fly."

"We never go near Carver's Woods," said the phoebe. "It's—well, it's not wise."

"You mean it's dangerous?" said Hubert. "Boys with guns or something?"

"Oh, nothing like that," said the phoebe. "But do take my advice, Hubert, and stay on this side of the village. Really, the other would be most foolhardy." And he flew away.

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Hubert was puzzled. "He might have told me what it is," he said. Then he said, "Oh, pooh!" and went anyway.

Carver's Woods were just the woodland belonging to the Carver place. It covered three or four acres. Hubert flew up and looked at it. There were some big old hemlocks that made the woods seem gloomy, but it didn't seem dangerous.

Hubert flew round to the other side and found a wide pasture that was full of milkweed. He made two trips home with a load of silk, and then on his third trip, as nothing had happened, he thought he would do a little exploring.

One thing did seem funny to him—there weren't any birds in the pasture, and there didn't seem to be any in the woods, either.

He sat on a hemlock branch at the edge of the woods for a while and listened. There certainly ought to be peewees and wood thrushes in there. But there wasn't a sound.

So then he flew into the woods a little way, keeping well up in the tops of the trees so he could escape if anything made a rush at him. The woods were very still and sort of expectant, but woods are always that way.

He had the feeling that something might surprise him any minute, but he didn't see why it mightn't just as easily be something pleasant as something unpleasant.

And then he began to get nervous. He wished that something *would* happen—even something unpleasant. But it didn't.

Hubert flew through the woods a little longer, and then he went out and swung on a milkweed stalk in the pasture. He was surprised that his experience had made him so jittery. Absence of experience, really, he thought. I suppose when you expect something, nothing's always worse.

When he had found a formula for it, he felt better. He also felt hungry. There were plenty of seeds of the kinds he liked because birds never came to the pasture, and when he'd had a good meal, he went home.

When he got there, Enid was showing a robin friend of hers named Laura the new decorations.

"Oh, how do you do, Hubert?" said Laura. "Aren't you thrilled with what Enid's done? Such an eye for colour she has! And where *did* you get that milkweed? I've never seen any just that shade before."

So Hubert told her.

"Oh no, Hubert!" she said dramatically. "Oh, not really! Oh dear!"

"Look," said Hubert, "what's all the whoopdedoo about

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Carver's Woods? It's just like any other wood. What's everybody so scared about?"

"Oh, but Hubert, you just don't understand—" said Laura, becoming flustered. "Oh, please do take my word for it. None of us would dream of going up there." She put a claw to her plump bosom. "Really, I feel quite faint," she said. "Forgive me, Enid—I'm afraid I'd better get home."

"My goodness," said Hubert when she had gone, "you'd think I'd dynamited a church or something. I'm going to get to the bottom of this."

Enid sniffed. "You'd better leave it alone," she said. "I don't know why you always have to stick your beak in places you're warned away from."

"Well, let 'em give me a reason, then," said Hubert. "I'm going to get to the bottom of it."

So he went off to get to the bottom of it.

But it took him several weeks before he found out anything at all. The other birds were very mysterious and lowered their voices when they answered his questions, and didn't really answer them at all.

When he pressed them, they seemed shocked and offended. "They act as if I was trying to sell them dirty postcards," he said.

"Don't tell me about it!" said Enid crossly. "You won't take my advice."

She wouldn't even go up to the milkweed pasture for supper with him. "Maybe the food's better," she said, "but I prefer to stick with the crowd."

One day, a woodpecker named Felix dropped in and asked Hubert if he didn't want to go up to the cider mill. "The farmers are beginning to haul apples," he said, "and I thought you'd be interested in seeing how they make cider."

"I've heard about that cider mill," said Enid. "Don't get so interested you fall in the barrel and drown like that husband of Laura's last year."

"Oh, you heard about that, did you?" said Felix. "Very sad thing. But don't worry. We're just going up to get our beaks wet."

"Well, don't overestimate the size of your beaks, that's all," said Enid.

So they went up to the mill. Some men were unloading sacks of apples, and others were rolling empty barrels in and full ones out, and there were about a million birds around. At least, it looked like a million to Hubert.

"They're full of cider," said Felix. "That's what makes

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them so active. I must say some of the boys carry it a little too far. Those kingbirds get a couple of drinks and then always want to fight. A gang of 'em got tight and tried to chase away an aeroplane last autumn so there aren't so many around this year. And look at that blackbird. He's trying to catch a fly and can't even see it. That fly's had plenty himself."

The fly was walking round in erratic circles on the ground, and the bird was following and making clumsy pecks at him. Pretty soon the fly crawled up on the blackbird's foot, and after looking for him for a minute, the bird went to sleep.

"Let's try the cider," said Felix, and they flew down and sipped from a little pool that had overflowed from one of the barrels.

"That's the real stuff!" said Hubert. "I bet it's got a kick like a mule."

"When it's three years old these farmers run their cars on it," said Felix.

"It's got some punch—I can tell that," said Hubert, and took another sip.

Well, pretty soon they were joined by a peewee named Eddie Lansing. Eddie had been up at the mill for two days and boasted that his beak hadn't been dry since he got there.

"Shame the way he treats that little wife of his," said Felix in an undertone. "Know her?"

Hubert said, "No."

"Sweet little thing," said Felix. "We'll hang on to Eddie and try to take him home when we go."

So they stayed around and played games for a while and sang and had a few more drinks. And then Felix said suddenly, "Good lord, I just thought! There's a lecture on Proust at the Town Hall this afternoon. It's a warm day and the windows will be open, so we can sit outside and hear it, and I promised Janie I'd take her. Sorry, Hubert, I must dash off. Keep an eye on Eddie, won't you?"

Hubert was feeling wonderful except for a small swarm of bees inside his head, and he thought, "Why should I bother about Eddie? I don't know his sweet little wife." But then he thought, "Oh well," and he said to Eddie, "Look, old-timer, how about getting back to town?"

Eddie gave him a boozy wink.

"Nuts," he said coarsely. "You can't take it, eh, sparrow?"

He tried to make a vulgar gesture with one claw, and nearly fell off the twig he was sitting on. He was obviously pretty far gone, and Hubert thought perhaps after all he'd better try to get him home. So he said, "Well, to tell you the truth, I guess

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I can't. I've had too much, and how I'm to get home unless you help me, I don't know."

"Oh," said Eddie, "whyn't you say so before? Li'l woman waitin' too, I s'pose? Come on."

So they started towards town. But Eddie's wings were in no condition for flying, and after half a mile during which he turned seven complete somersaults in the air, he crashed into a large elm and hung there, panting.

"This ain't a race," he said crossly. "Hurry, hurry, always hurry! Why can't you take it easy?"

Hubert said he was sorry and then he said, "You live in Carver's Woods, don't you, Eddie?"

"Carver's Woods!" said Eddie. "Ain't anybody lives there."

"Funny," said Hubert. "Now why should I connect you—"

"I was born there," said Eddie. He sighed and closed his eyes. "Ah, youth—youth! Flitting away—flitting away."

He seemed to be dropping off to sleep, and Hubert said, "If you were born there, it must have been safe enough then."

"Good old days in Carver's Woods before the Ignormus came," mused Eddie. "Roamin' in the wildwood, happy and free. All the bugs you could eat. Gone—gone f'r ever."

"What's the Ignormus?" Hubert asked, and Eddie gave a sort of shudder and his eyes opened and he said in a perfectly sober voice, "Stop talking nonsense. I thought you wanted me to take you home."

"O.K.," said Hubert, realizing that he would get no more information from Eddie now.

But next day Hubert met Eddie on Congress Street. "I've been looking for you," said Eddie. "Look, Hubert, I was pretty well pickled right through yesterday, and I kind of remember talking—"

"About the Ignormus," said Hubert.

"Psst! For heaven's sake," Eddie protested. "Come on up to the church steeple where we can't be overheard."

So Hubert followed him up there and then said, "See here, Eddie, for some reason you don't want it known that you talked about the Ignormus, whatever it is, and that's all right—I won't say anything. Only you've got to tell me something about it."

Eddie hummed and hawed a lot, but at last said, "Well—what do you want to know?"

"What *is* the Ignormus?" asked Hubert, and Eddie said, "Nobody knows."

"O.K.," said Hubert, "if you won't play, you won't. Only you needn't expect—"

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"But I mean it," said Eddie. "The Ig—the—well, *it* lives in Carver's Woods. It came three—oh, three or four years ago. Nobody's ever seen it—not really to see it, you understand. But we know it's got teeth and claws and big fiery eyes that expand—Gosh, Hubert, I don't like even to think about it!"

"Yeah," said Hubert, "but how do you know so much about something nobody's seen? Oh, never mind—I know the argument you'll use for that. Yes. What I want to get at is—how'd you first know it was there? Who found out first?"

Eddie didn't know about that. He thought it was just sort of something that everybody sensed.

"Like a bad smell," said Hubert. "But somebody has to smell it first."

So Eddie thought hard, and at last he said that old Jock, who was a crow who lived on the Goodwin farm, north of the village, might know something if he could be made to talk. "I sort of remember people saying that Jock had seen it," he said.

"Thanks, Eddie," said Hubert. "I won't give you away."

Hubert knew that Jock probably wouldn't talk any more than the other birds, so the next few days he spent partly in further explorations of the woods and partly in thinking up a plan. Then one day as he was sitting in the top of one of the hemlocks, Jock flew by.

"Help! Help!" yelled Hubert and dashed wildly out.

Jock gave a startled caw and sheered off and then, seeing who it was, he flew up alongside. "What're you yelling about, sparrow?" he asked.

"Oh," gasped Hubert, "where is it? Is it following me?"

"There's nothing after you," said the crow. "Come on over in the cornfield and tell me about it."

So they went down into the stubble and Hubert said, "What a terrible experience! It came heaving up through the leaves—a thing as big as a barn. All claws and great, flapping, leathery wings—"

"Sure," said Jock, cocking an eye at him. "Probably one of those red squirrels. Lots of them in the woods."

"Listen, crow," said Hubert. "You're so brave—just drop down into the woods where you saw me fly up, and if you come out alive, I'll admit I'm a liar."

"Nothing doing," said the crow decisively. "Don't be huffy. I don't doubt your word. But you know, nobody's ever seen it by daylight before."

"You mean the Ignormus?" said Hubert.

"Please!" said Jock, holding up a claw. "If you don't mind—no names. It's not wise."

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"Oh, all right," said Hubert. "But how could anybody see it except by daylight? You couldn't see it in the dark."

"Well, you could and you couldn't," said the crow. "I mean, it isn't real the way you and I are. You might hunt the woods through and not find it at all. And at the same time in the dark you might not see it, but you'd know it was there just the same."

"Nothing very terrible about that," said Hubert.

"On the contrary," Jock said, "the terrible thing is that it *isn't* there—that you *don't* see it."

"Pretty metaphysical," said Hubert.

"You boys have names for everything," said Jock.

"Well, so do you," Hubert said. "You've got a name for this thing. What is it? Where'd it come from?"

Well, it was like pulling teeth to get any information out of the crow, but Hubert finally got a little. Nobody knew when the Ignormus first came to Carver's Woods. It must have been four or five years ago. Some of the birds had begun to leave the woods—they'd been frightened by something.

There was a lot of vague talk and the woods began to get a bad name. More birds left. Then one night two birds disappeared—a wren and a bluejay.

"Nothing very strange in that, perhaps," Jock said. "They were friends and both had nagging wives. But it was the manner of their disappearance."

No, he didn't remember the details exactly. But it had all been very queer. They never came back. There was more whispering and more hints, and soon no more birds lived in the woods. None even went near them. It was the first bit of advice mothers gave their fledgelings—*don't go near Carver's Woods.*

The name? Jock didn't know where the name came from. But somebody must have known what the thing's name was. You couldn't make up a name like that. Though nobody said it out loud any more. You could call it superstition if you wanted to, but there was probably good sense behind it. There was behind all superstitions. No bird, for instance, would fly under a ladder. There was sense in that. He might get a pot of paint on his head.

Hubert didn't say anything to Enid about this interview. She was a practical person who could take her myths or leave them alone, or both at the same time. The one thing she didn't want to do was to explode them.

But Hubert explored the woods from end to end, satisfying himself that there was nothing there. The funny thing was that he couldn't quite get over the slight quaking in his gizzard that

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began as soon as he flew into the green half-light under the hemlocks. He was always glad to get out into the open again.

There was another thing that was even funnier. In whispers and hints and half-sentences, he began to hear echoes of the yarn he had told Jock. The Ignormus had been seen again. Some bird had been chased. A goldfinch had disappeared in Carver's Woods. The thing had chased a flock of blackbirds. It had great, leathery wings that darkened the sky.

Hubert knew they were echoes of his story because of the wings. The Ignormus had never had wings before.

It made Hubert feel quite superior and sophisticated. And when you feel like that it's pretty hard to keep your mouth shut. One day he went up to the cider mill again. The usual crowd was there, along with a few early migrants from up north. Eddie Lansing was having a sort of bragging contest with one of the visitors—a red-winged blackbird.

The red-wing came from Oswego and he was talking like a Chamber of Commerce bulletin about the bracing Lake Ontario breezes and so on. Eddie was doing his best, but Aeschylus Centre was a pretty small village and there wasn't much to say about it.

I guess Eddie was pretty tight or he wouldn't have brought the Ignormus into it. Of course, he didn't mention it by name, but he began hinting about their local horror and how dreadful and ferocious he was.

The red-wing was sceptical, so Eddie added more details and even began to describe the huge leather wings.

That day one of the Aeschylus Centre high-school teachers had brought her class up to the cider mill to study birds. They were sitting under a big tree and watching the birds through opera-glasses.

Hubert went over to Eddie and called his attention to them.

"Well, what about them?" said Eddie, who was cross at being interrupted.

"Oh, nothing," said Hubert, "if you don't mind having every move you make watched. Personally, I think these slumming parties up here ought to be stopped. They watch what we do and write it all down in notebooks and send in their conclusions to bird societies all over the country. Maybe you don't mind having your actions at the cider mill reported on."

And he began reading from an imaginary report: "Habits of peewees: peewees are said to partake freely of intoxicating liquors and to act generally in a rowdy and dissolute manner—"

"Oh, that's what they're doing, is it?" said Eddie. "Well, I'll soon put a stop to that."

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And he flew over towards the teacher and began making power dives at her nose and then zooming up with a sort of thin screech until she dropped her glasses and ran for it.

Everybody was pleased at the way Hubert had handled the situation and when the visiting birds were gone, several of the locals congratulated him. "We can't have outsiders ridiculing us and saying that we're afraid of something that doesn't exist," said a woodpecker.

"No," said Hubert. "Particularly as it's true."

"What do you mean, it's true?" said the woodpecker, and Felix, who had joined the group, said, "You'll be telling us next you wouldn't be scared to spend the night in Carver's Woods."

"Well, I wouldn't," said Hubert. "I've explored the woods thoroughly. There's nothing there. Look here, you fellows—it's time you had some sense about this. If there's something there, why can't you find anybody who's ever seen it? Why don't you know what it looks like or what it does?"

"I don't like this kind of talk," said the woodpecker.

"What we don't know won't hurt us," said a wren.

"That's where you're wrong," said Hubert. "It's just what you don't know that does hurt you. Look here. If I shut my eyes, you cease to exist for me. If I open them, there you are again. It's the opposite with this Ignormus. It's only when you shut your eyes that you see it and get scared.

"Open your eyes, my friends," he said earnestly. "You are afraid to face reality and so you face something worse. Worse because it has no limits for evil except what your imagination can find. Worse because—"

Hubert suddenly stopped. Everybody had gone. Everybody except Felix.

"Look, Hubert, you talk too much. You keep on and you'll talk yourself right out of Aeschylus Centre."

"Well, it makes me mad to see everybody swallowing this nonsense," Hubert said. "They're as proud of the Ignormus as of Abraham Lincoln."

"Pooh!" said Felix. "What harm does it do? Suppose there isn't anything in the woods—and mind you, I believe there is—why isn't it more of a thing because nobody has seen it? It adds mystery. And we can do with a little mystery around here."

Hubert said, "I don't agree. The mystery's in the woods anyway. It adds fear—and that's something different."

"Have it your own way," said Felix.

Hubert found he had made himself unpopular by his speech against the Ignormus. He didn't mind so much for himself,

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because it gave him a pleasant feeling of being martyred for speaking the truth.

But when invitations fell off and nobody came to call, Enid got annoyed. "I get the nest all fixed up and changed round so we'll have a nice place to entertain our friends," she said, "and then you go and make a fool of yourself and scare everybody away. Sometimes I think you haven't a grain of sense in your head."

There's something noble about being a public martyr, but there isn't much glory about being martyred in the home. So Hubert hunted up Felix.

"Look here, Felix," he said, "I'm going to prove this thing, one way or the other. I'm going to spend the night in Carver's Woods. And I'm making no secret of it. If I've been wrong, I guess I can face the music."

Felix looked at him a minute, then said, "O.K."

Hubert thought Enid might come through with some admiration when he told her what he had said to Felix. But all she said was, "Don't be late for breakfast. And don't perch in a draught."

Just before sunset he flew off towards the woods. But it was no part of his plan to go into them—he found a comfortable perch in a big hickory across the pasture from the woods, and slept soundly all night.

There were some raspberry bushes by the fence near the tree, and a few of the berries were still ripe. Just before sunrise he flew down and smeared a lot of raspberry juice on his breast and one wing and ruffled up his feathers and flew back to the village. "Nobody up yet," he said. "Well, this ought to fix everything."

There is a sort of green in the middle of Aeschylus Centre, and Hubert went out into the middle of the green and lay down on his back, with his claws in the air, and closed his eyes and waited. He didn't have to wait long. In a few minutes he was seen, and a dozen birds flew down.

They chattered excitedly, and one of them went off to get Enid. Hubert kept quiet until she got there.

"Oh, Hubert, you fool!" she sobbed. "Didn't really think you'd go. Do something, somebody!" she said, turning on the birds who were crowding around them.

"He's stopped bleeding," said someone.

"Don't you worry, ma'am," said an elderly wren. "Look at him breathe—easy and peaceful. He'll make old bones yet."

Just then Hubert opened one eye. "I'm—all right," he said weakly. "Like to—get home." Then he opened both eyes in a

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terrified stare. "Oh," he said in a loud voice, "that terrible great bulk! Like a boulder flying! A boulder with eyes! Keep it off me—Oh!"

"He's fainted," said the wren, and turned to Enid. "Look here, ma'am, you can't get him home in that condition. I've got a little nest in that barberry bush. 'Tain't any palace, but such as it is, you're welcome, and we can tuck him up there until he feels better." So Enid and the wren got Hubert on his feet and into the nest.

Hubert seemed to feel better when he was alone with Enid. "I'll be all right," he said, "if I can just get a little rest."

"But where are you hurt?" Enid asked.

"Under my wing, I guess," said Hubert. "No—don't touch it. It'll be all right. Don't flutter."

But Enid wasn't fluttering—she was staring. "You just rest," she said. And then, "I suppose some raspberries are still ripe in the woods."

Hubert started up convulsively. "Eh?" he said, and then he dropped back and closed his eyes.

"Oh, the woods!" he moaned.

"I'm sorry, dear," Enid said. "I won't talk any more."

"I'd like you to talk," said Hubert, "only not about—woods. And there's one thing—don't ever ask me what happened."

"No, dear," said Enid soothingly, "I don't need to."

Hubert got well as quickly as he could without causing talk. Everybody was nice to him, and as soon as he was home, all Aeschylus Centre came to call. Nobody ever suggested that he retract his insinuations about the Ignormus. It was felt that he'd had his lesson. And really, I think he had.

But one night a few weeks later, he flew over to Carver's Woods after Enid was asleep. "I can prove it to myself, anyway," he thought, "even if I can't tell anybody."

It was very dark under the trees, but there was a little light along the old overgrown path, and he alighted on a branch above it. It was awfully still.

He began to get that queer, empty feeling inside him. He sang for a while, but that was worse. He had the impression that something giggled nastily every time he began to sing. But when he stopped, there wasn't anything.

And it kept getting darker. He couldn't see things—just the shapes of them. There was a big rock beside the path, and as he watched it, he thought he could see it breathe. Then he thought it got up and went across the path.

"But it couldn't!" he said angrily. "There's nothing here—nothing. It's my nerves—that's what." And he took his courage

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in both claws and flew down. The rock was just where it had always been.

He went back to his perch. But he couldn't stop watching the rock. "A boulder," he thought. "That's what I said—a flying boulder."

Pretty soon he thought it was standing up on one end—trying to look at him. "It *can't* be just nerves," he thought. "If I fly down— "

But he couldn't fly down. Not again. And then he thought it reared up higher as if to grab him.

Hubert's self-control exploded in a loud squawk, and he leapt into the air and flapped his wings desperately to reach the glimmering streak of open sky.

He never remembered how he got home. Enid was there and still asleep, and he went to bed without waking her. But he never went to Carver's Woods again.

"Nerves?" he said to himself time after time. "No, that wasn't all nerves. There's something. Even if it hasn't got leather wings, there's something."

* * *

PAPER CLIP

Pick up a paper clip—you'll find
A second paper clip entwined.

The way they cling to one another,
You'd think they were a child and mother,

Or strolling lovers, arm in arm,
Or clutching cowards, fearing harm.

Although a clip may cut a caper
And fail to clip a piece of paper,

One thing it holds with faithful grip
And that's another paper clip.

RICHARD ARMOUR

* * *

ARGOSY FOR H.M. FORCES

When you have read this copy of Argosy, why not pass it on to a member of H.M. Forces?

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HELL DRIVERS

There was a howl of tyres and the whole world seemed to explode

by JOHN KRUSE

I DROVE for Hawlett's. I drove a truck for them. It was a dirty business. I should have known enough not to try it, only I needed the money to buy a house so we shouldn't have to go on living in one room, now Jeanie is nearly three.

I heard about Hawlett's from a guy I met in a pub in London. They had put a plate in his skull, and he said they were curing his squint by massage; but you could see by the way he hung onto things that he would never drive again. His nerve was gone.

I might have taken a hint from that, but it was the money that interested me—twenty quid a week, he said. One guy there was knocking up twenty-five. "Don't do it," he said when he saw the gleam in my eye. "I don't know what you're getting now."

"Six quid ~~fifteen~~, after deductions," I told him. "Laying mucky pipes for the Council."

"You're well off," he said, hanging onto the bar as if it was fighting to get away from him. "Take it from me, you're a ruddy millionaire."

Well, I come from North Saskatchewan. Where the trees grow. I've been fending for myself ever since I was old enough to spring a trap, so I didn't say anything, but that night after tea I went out, up the hill where the new houses are, and did some thinking.

It was six years since they'd demobbed me from the 5th Canadian Armoured and I'd settled down with Liz in one room of her old man's house in Hounslow, outer London. Six years—and I had got about as far as you could shot-put a steam shovel. Driving a diesel-roller in summer, pipe-laying in winter. Forty-eight quid I had in the Post Office. One hundred and thirty dollars odd.

Up on the hill the houses were all new, as I said, and looking at the lights coming out through their curtains gave me a funny feeling. Back home in Sass, when I was a kid, a girl in the cabin across the swamp from us had a doll's house. It was crazy, me big enough to tote a gun and everything, but do you know, I always wanted that doll's house. It was the white lines between

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the bricks. And now in the light from the street-lamps I could see the same white lines on the houses, clear as could be. Nice fresh mortar.

I thought of walls drying out; the shine and smell of new paint in a kitchen. Jeanie could have a room of her own. I had it all worked out, how I would set about it, with those stencils—elephants and kangaroos and hippos—all round the walls. It was important for her to have a room of her own now she was getting on for three and would remember things.

So I forgot about the guy with the plate in his skull. I forgot about everything but the dough. I had done my figuring.

The next day I drew my cards and coppers from the time-keeper and quit. You can do that on Public Works. You could catch fire and they wouldn't look round.

The next morning Liz gave me a shove at five. She had never heard of Hawlett's, so what I was doing didn't mean anything to her. She just thought I had got wind of a better job. It wouldn't be for long, I told her, and I'd be back on Sundays. She took the sleeping-away part quietly. She's like that—quiet. As good a wife as a man could wish for.

Dawn was just a furnace-glow in the sky when I fiddled the gate open.

Looking back, I could see Jeanie in the window of the lighted bedroom. She made her golliwog wave its arm at me. I gave the little skip she liked and then I was on my way with a lump in my throat as big as a cantaloup.

This was kind of a big step I was taking.

I reached Packer's Green around nine. It looked like any other English market-town gone commercial. A lot of rolling-stock was standing about in the yards. Tall new chimneys picketed the old red-brick buildings. The sky was mostly carbon.

I followed the porter's directions and wound up at the gate-house of a big open plant facing onto a dual carriageway. The name HAWLETT'S hit the air in large white letters from every piece of equipment in sight—mixers, grabs, cranes, diggers. The parking-lot looked more like an armoured division in camp than a building contractor's yard.

The old soldier at the gate raised a pair of steel-wool eyebrows at me. I told him I wanted to see the transport foreman.

"No jobs," he said, turning to wave a timber truck through.

That stopped me. "I heard different," I said. "I heard you needed men to drive tipper trucks; that you couldn't get them."

The big old guy looked at me. "Ballast, you mean?"

"Yeah, that's right."

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He bored through me with his eyes, as if I'd dropped my rifle or something. I could see that with him ballast was different. Ballast was quite different.

He stuck his head in through the stable door and said something to one of his mates. I heard a phone ping. The old guy came back. He didn't look at me.

"Do you think it'll stay fine?" I asked him.

He made a face at the sky. "It might. If you don't touch it."

After a spell they got word to let me through. I went along to the low building they pointed out, and into a little room where a spotty-faced kid was perched on a stool, reading a comic. I told him my name was Yately. While he went off to spread it around, I parked the parcel with my spare shirt in it in the corner, and stood looking out of the window without seeing anything. My stomach felt queer.

The guy the kid took me to wasn't the foreman. He might have been the transport manager, I don't know; but he was middle-height, in a hairy suit open over a waistcoat stuck with pens. He had his head bent over his desk, and his hair looked like a handful of cigarette-ash.

He gave me a little flick of his eyes. "Shut the door."

I shut it and said, "Good morning."

He went on writing for a moment; then he blotted it with a quick, neat movement; gave me another flick of his eyes.

"Yes?"

I told him what I had come for.

"Ballast, eh?" he said. Everyone said that. "After the cash, I suppose." He had a dried-out face, dusty-looking, with a mouth like a razor-slit.

"Yes," I said, grinning.

He went on arranging his papers. "Well, it's there to be earned. But you've got to be the right bloke to earn it. How long've you been driving?"

"Twelve years."

"Any accidents?"

"One."

"Whose fault was that?"

"Mine, I guess."

"Licence." He held out his hand.

I gave it him. He turned to the back pages. They were clean.

"No endorsements," I said.

He held the book up to the light to see if I had scratched out anything. "No convictions for speeding?"

"No, sir."

"Why not?"

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I blinked at him. " I—I dunno. Guess I was never caught."

He didn't smile. If he'd been wearing a mud-pack he couldn't have smiled less. He flipped the licence back to me and raked me over with his eyes. " In that case I'll have to know the name and address of your last employer."

I told him. He wrote it down. He would check it; he was that kind of guy. He got up and looked out of the window.

" You sound slow to me. I want fast drivers. Really fast—fifty-mile-an-hour touch, right round the clock. Could you do that? "

" Depends on the roads."

" Bad roads. Wet or fine."

" What about the speed-limit? "

He shrugged. " That's up to you. If you're caught, you pay your own fine. Our orders are simply quick delivery. We're doing a rush contract over at Brush. New television studios. They have to be up and working before commercial television comes in. If you don't think you could handle five tons at that speed, just say so."

" I can handle it," I said. " But it would have to be worth my while. What's the screw? "

" We don't pay a wage. You get five bob a load."

" Over what distance? "

" Ten miles each way."

He watched me work it out. It seemed to come to the heck of a lot of money.

When he was quite sure I'd got it, he added: " Thirteen loads a day minimum. Anything under that and you're fired."

I multiplied thirteen by ten and then doubled it. I guess my eyes must have bulged out like bubblegum.

" Two-sixty miles a day *and* loading! It ain't possible."

" It's possible all right. If you keep going. Eat at the wheel."

" But, heck, what about breakdowns? "

" You maintain your own lorry at night. If it breaks down, that's your fault. Thirteen's our absolute minimum—we had one bloke who did eighteen. And we like you to keep your vehicle clean. There's a bonus each week for the best-looking lorry."

If you've got one left, I thought. I didn't like it. I didn't like him or it. I wasn't even sure it was legal. I stood there weighing it up in my head while he looked me over. I could tell that he thought I wasn't big or tough enough. No matter how you're put together, five-foot-four to most people is sample-size, and it's like a finger in the eye to me.

I tried to reason out the pros and cons of the job coolly, but

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once I get the idea in my head that someone is sneering at my height, I can't think clearly about anything. If this strip of jerked meat thought I hadn't got the nerve to hold five tons of ballast on a bad road at that speed, he was crazy.

" Give me a trial," I said.

He chewed his lip and stood on one foot. " Hmm. Suppose I could. Just one turn around. I'll get the fitter to take you out."

He picked up the telephone. There wasn't a lot of enthusiasm in the way he did it.

The fitter was a spare, silent guy with long-range eyes. He came sauntering round the truck, wiping his hands on some cotton waste. He looked through me and nodded to someone a thousand miles away. We swung up into the cab together and pulled out of the gate, across the highway and down a twisty lane, with me driving and him directing.

The truck he had brought round for me was a five-ton tipper, not new but with plenty of power. I took her along steady for a little to get the feel of her. It was lucky I did. We nearly altered the first T-junction into an X-road.

I backed off the verge and glanced at the fitter. He didn't say anything.

" Brakes need taking up," I said. He nodded.

" How the hell am I supposed to drive fast if the brakes don't work? "

" Use your gears," he said.

Damn you, I thought. I used them. I began to pile on the heat, footing her in and out of the twisty lanes, using my gears like a road-race driver. The engine whinnied and roared; she had bags of compression. The fitter just sat there watching the road, directing me with an oily forefinger.

The country opened out and presently there was a big, excavated lake with a couple of floats working on it, and a mountain of ballast machinery at the far end.

I followed the finger round and into the ballast yard and along between big stockpiles of sand and gravel to the hoppers. There were three of them, sort of big steel funnels for storing gravel, sixty feet high if they were an inch, set on piles, with a loading bay under each. The finger directed me round into the first bay and halted me with the hopper doors dead over our back.

He swung out. " Know how to work 'em? "

I said no. He loose-limbed it up onto the back, caught hold of the handles, and swung on them. A gush of gravel hit the skip, built up a quick cone.

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When the truck was full, he let the doors crunch shut, levelled off with a shovel, and got down.

"Always level off. Cops are hot on it," he said.

We got back into the truck and he directed me over onto a weighbridge where a little one-legged guy gave us a ticket. We pulled out and away. The whole thing took less than six minutes.

"Where to now?" I asked him.

"Brush. Let's see you shift."

We went along onto another road and I gave her the gun. It gave me a nasty feeling, with all that ballast in back and no brakes, but I knew he was timing me. This was my test.

I got her up to forty. She swayed a bit. On corners the load felt like a big hand pushing us across the road. I held her, but I couldn't hold the speed. The needle dropped. I stepped on the accelerator again. The needle fussed up, dropped back. It just wasn't that kind of a road. High banks and blind corners, hedgerows just thick enough to stop you seeing across into the next bend. Safely, it couldn't be done.

We came to a sharp elbow-turn. I changed down.

Suddenly from the opposite direction two trucks came at us. They were so close together the back one looked as if it was on tow. I pulled hard into the verge. They knifed past us as if they'd been fired from White Sands.

I caught a flash of HAWLETT'S in big white letters. A shower of grit hit our windscreen. We scraped the hedge.

I said something. The fitter didn't bat an eyelid. "Red chasin' Johnny," he said.

I eased her away from the hedge and got going again. Inside me somewhere, something laid a big, cold egg. This job was suicide. I asked him how many crack-ups they had a week.

"One or two," he said. It didn't seem to bother him. Nothing seemed to bother him. He was one of those insulated guys you meet once in a while. But me—I'm just the bare wires, and I didn't like it.

At intervals all the way to Brush, Hawlett's trucks kept whipping past us. There were two villages on the route, one with a school, squeezed into about four miles of continuous speed-limit. I crashed the limit the whole way to make up time.

At Brush we swung into the temporary gates of a large site where about seven acres of concrete and steel was going up in sections. We tipped our load onto a big stockpile.

Even while we did so, mobile grabs were eating into the pile behind us and rushing it off to feed a battery of hungry concrete-mixers. You could say what you liked, Hawlett's sure set about a job in a business-like way.

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A foreman stubbed his initials into our log-book and we drove back to the main plant.

We stopped outside the transport office. The dried-out guy came to the door. I got out. The fitter slid across into the driving-seat. It looked as if he was going to drive off without even bothering to give his verdict.

O.K., so I'd failed. But I wasn't that bad. "Come on," I snapped. "Let's have it."

The fitter glanced across at the dried-out guy. He gave a little nod; that was all. Then he was gone.

Drypuss looked surprised. He eyed me for a moment. Then he turned and jerked his head for me to follow him inside. You could have knocked me down with a toffee-paper.

Within an hour I was on the road. They had given me the same truck, a set of tools, and a tank of petrol, and here I was entering the ballast yard for my first load, wondering if this was really me.

I loaded up without seeing a soul, and got going. As half the day was over already, thirteen trips didn't apply, so I took it easy and got to know the road.

I made two trips without much happening to me.

On my way back to load up for the third time, I noticed two Hawlett's trucks moving up behind me. I tried to pull away from them, but they came right up onto my tail, the front one way over on the right, trying to pass, the second one on his inside, trying to nose him out. They filled the road from verge to verge and the corners were blind. I nearly got grey hair just from looking in the mirror.

There was a car ahead of me. I got past it just before a station wagon came round the corner from the opposite direction. It flashed past. I hunched my shoulders and listened for the crash.

There was a squeal of tyres. Nothing more.

How they got away with it, I don't know. One of them must have taken the bank.

I got to the ballast pit first and pulled round under the hoppers. I was up on the back, letting in the gravel, when they came in. They rushed up behind me, the first one slithering to a halt a yard from my back. The second one drew up level with him, turned his wheels full lock and braced his front tyre against the other's hub. He revved his engine and began to nudge him out of the way.

The first driver shouted, tried to nudge him back. They tussled there behind me with their wheels locked, laughing and cursing.

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One of them leaned out of his cab, yelled at me: "Snap it up, mate. Red's coming."

I let the hopper doors slam, began to level off. It didn't seem to worry them that they'd just nearly got killed.

"Who the hell is Red?" I asked him.

He looked at me, called to the other: "Hey, Dago. We got a new bloke. Doesn't know who Red is."

"He'll find out. Where'd you spring from, Jack?"

"Just signed on," I told him. "The name's Chick."

"Well, stop clucking, Chick, and let's get in there."

I grinned and climbed down into the cab. As I pulled away, they made chicken noises at me.

I had been going about seven minutes when the first one caught me up again. I held him off for a bit, but his brakes were better than mine, so I waved him on. He shot by, tooting his horn. Five minutes later, the second one came past. I speeded up a bit and sat on his tail. I wanted to see how these boys drove.

I was glad I did. That guy did things with a load I'd never seen in my life. He let it slide him, for one thing—real racing drifts. And he didn't take his curves plain, the way I was taught. He took them bite by bite with his front wheels, to correct the tilt of his load. For crash stops he pulled up in a zigzag—to give himself friction and save his brakes. I learnt plenty from just watching him.

At Brush he tipped his load ahead of me and I got a better look at him. He was a thin, nervy guy with dark sideboards like a Spaniard. He showed his teeth at me, but we didn't have time to talk.

I left the site a couple of minutes behind him. As I was going out through the gate, another ballast truck came bashing in. There was about room in the gateway for the two of us and the ace of spades. The way he judged it, he'd have split that card right down the centre. I got a glimpse of sandy-pink hair and a jaw you could mend boots on, and he was gone.

Red, I thought. Now Red was behind me.

The craziness of the thing was beginning to get into me. I wondered if I could make the pit before he did. I put my foot down. The road was clearer than it had been and I made good time.

I was less than a couple of miles from home base before I saw a truck growing in my mirror. It was Red, all right. I was doing about forty-five, and, using all the road to do it, he came up on me as if I was parked, having lunch. He must have been clocking high in the fifties. He stood on his nose behind me and hammered his horn.

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There was a straight stretch in front, so I gave the truck everything she could burn. I managed to stay ahead of him—just—with him hooting at me all the way. Beyond the trees I could see the red rust of the ballast plant. I gave a final burst and skidded through the gates into the yard, along and round under the hoppers. I had made it.

I overshot the doors a little and had to back up. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw that Red hadn't pulled round behind me. He was turning in the yard. He blew his horn and started to back into me. I blew mine back: but he kept on coming, not fast, but steady.

He looked set to stove in my front. I thought quickly and slipped into reverse, backing away from him and yelling.

He didn't stop. He forced me backwards till his own skip was under the hopper. He put on his brakes and slid out; climbed up onto the back and reached for the ballast doors.

"Hey!" I shouted at him. "What's the idea? I was in first."

He didn't take any notice; began taking in gravel.

I got out and went up to his truck. "What do you want to do that for?" I asked him.

He looked hard at me over his shoulder, maybe noticing for the first time that I was new. He had a pink and white face with flaky skin, the sort that is torture in the sun, and big, high shoulders. He didn't say anything; it was too much bother. He took his shovel and began to level off. I was wild, but I couldn't think of anything to say or do.

After a couple of minutes, he was loaded. I stood gritting my teeth and watched him churn away. He hadn't given me another glance.

All good clean fun, I thought, getting back into my truck. I sure was learning a thing or two about trucking that day.

I was still kicking myself when I got to Brush. I tipped my load and headed for the nearest café. I bought a pie and a coffee and sat at a little plastic table and scowled at the wall.

Relax, I told myself. You're making money. Twenty-five bob already—more than for a whole day's work for the Council.

And Saturday would bring in maybe seventeen-eighteen quid. Maybe it was a dirty job, but it was a way out. It was like a doorway set in a brick wall—just one doorway. I could stay shut in or go out through the door. Outside the door was that new house I was going to buy.

I got back on the road again and made for the pit. I felt better; but maybe it was just the pie. Going through the second of the two villages I saw my first cop car. It was parked up a

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turning, with two bluebottles in it. They were watching the road where it passed the school.

I cut speed and looked in the mirror. They didn't come after me. Aha, I thought, a place to watch.

The village fell away. Suddenly I jammed on everything and pulled in to the side. A Hawlett's truck was way off the road in a field. It had burst a big hole in the hedge, taken a fence with it, and now stood tilted over in the soft ground.

The guy who had signalled me came running up. It was the thin, dark one with the sideboards.

"Thank heaven you stopped, mate. I've been flagging our boys for half an hour. Give us a hand quick, before the cops see me." He was white and shaking.

"Sure," I said. "What happened?"

"Never mind what happened. We got to be quick. If them rozzers take a turn out this way, I'm sunk."

I backed up to the gap and got out. I could see his tyre-marks, where he had braked, reaching fifty yards back along the road. There seemed to be two sets of them, side by side. I asked him about them.

The dark guy didn't look at me. "I dunno. There was a bloke just behind me, I think. Look, I ain't got a tow-chain. Do you think we could use this fence?"

We stripped the wire off the bust fence and twisted it into a cable. I backed along the road and hauled him out through the hole he had made. It took about ten minutes. I went along and had a look at his truck.

The front was messed up a bit, but she was going O.K. There was a deep graze running along the off side, as though someone had sideswiped him.

"Who was it?" I asked him.

He looked scared. "Look," he said, "thanks a lot. You're a pal. More'n those other beggars. They wouldn't spit in your mouth if your teeth were on fire. This settles me. I'm jagging in. Soon as I've done my thirteen, I'm jagging in. They can put this job where the monkey put the nuts." He nipped up into his cab. "If I were you, mate, I'd get moving—afore anybody sees you giving me a hand."

He drove off. Something screwy was going on. I wondered who "anybody" was. No one came up and told me, so I got moving as he said. It was none of my business.

I did seven trips that day. I was pretty darn tuckered when I got back to Hawlett's. But I wasn't through yet. If I wanted to put up thirteen trips the next day I would have to get those brakes fixed.

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I looked out the fitter who had tested me, and asked him for an inspection-lamp. He had on his cycle-clips. He was just off home.

"You don't want to work on that heap tonight," he said. "Dago quit this evening. You take his truck tomorrow. I'll fix those brakes in the morning."

"Dago," I said. "Was that the dark guy?"

"Yeah. He hit something. Truck's running O.K., though."

"Well, thanks," I said. "That'll help a lot. I haven't even got a place to sleep yet."

"Boys at the gate'll give you an address."

I walked with him to the gate. The old soldier there looked me out a list of houses willing to sleep drivers. I took it along with me and found a place. They asked for my half-crown in advance. I went out and got a fish supper and hit the sack early. Tomorrow looked like being kind of rugged.

The difference between Dago's truck and mine was the difference between gin and water. All you had to do was point it, and it burnt a hole in the air. I did the first three trips in two hours and a bit, with the sun shining and fading, and a stiff wind blowing the birds about. I was feeling fine after my sleep.

Here I come, I thought. Make way for the candyman. No one was going to catch me today. I jumped four places in the column and the guys I passed looked pretty sick.

On the fourth run, though, I saw something which wiped the grin off my face. Someone was gaining on me. I was empty, driving just about as fast as it was possible to go on that twisty road; but, just the same, someone was gaining on me.

I watched him grow till he was sniffing my exhaust. I couldn't see who it was. But I could guess. I was doing all right without breaking my neck, so I eased up a little and waved him on.

He pulled up level with me. I glanced across into his cab. It was Red, all right. He was too busy to see me. He was running it a bit fine, I thought—too fine. I braked.

At the same moment he turned his wheels in against mine. The steering-wheel kicked out of my hands. I swerved; snatched her back under control.

He knocked me again, but I had her tight this time. I braked hard and he overshot me. I banged my horn furiously. He seemed to hesitate in front of me for a moment; then suddenly began to accelerate away.

I hung onto the wheel for a second, feeling as if someone had stabbed me with an icicle. Then I jammed my foot down and went after him. I was so mad I could hardly see.

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He spotted me coming and began to drive like crazy. The two of us skidded and screeched round the corners—neither of us gaining anything.

There was another Hawlett's truck. We went past that and down the hill across a bridge into the village, where cars were parked in front of the shops and a van was turning. We missed the van by inches. Someone threw himself off his bicycle to get out of the way. A Hawlett's truck, coming the other way, had to pull right into the side, and bumped up on the pavement. People screamed.

Somehow, heaven knows how, Red began to gain. He had stretched his lead to a hundred yards by the time we reached the school. He swung out to pass a car, cut in sharp ahead of it to avoid a bus. A bell started to clang somewhere. The next thing I knew, the car was moving with us, sandwiched between us and gathering speed. It was a cop car.

I was fighting mad or I'd have quit then. But I wanted to be in at the kill.

Red kept going, with the car hard after him hooting and clanging, and me right behind the car—out of the village into the country, the three of us clocking well over fifty.

And then it happened. There was a sharp bend. Red disappeared round it. The car took it flat and fast. Suddenly, there in front of it was Red's truck—it had almost stopped. There was a howl of tyres and a horrible crash. I stamped on my brakes, felt the back twist sideways. The whole world seemed to sidestep and explode.

When I woke up, I was in bed in a ward. There was a lot of glass with rain dotted on the outside of it, and faces, and pain. The pain wasn't anywhere special; it seemed to be in the air, pressing me all over.

"He's coming round," someone said. A nurse leaned over me, like my mother used to, her breath making a noise in her nose.

"Can I try him now?" It was a man with a bald head. He was the first cop I had ever seen with his hat off. He tilted his chair till his big red face was close to mine.

"Can you understand me?"

I nodded.

"You know why I'm here. We want a statement from you."

I remembered, in a rush. I tried to sit up, but my body was encased in something. That scared me.

"You've got a few broken ribs," the nurse said. "You'll be all right."

I groaned. "What about the others?"

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The cop drew back a little. " The two constables are dead."

The muscles way down in my stomach went cold and let go, all at once.

I tried to speak. Nothing would come.

" Killed on the spot," he said with a sort of sigh. He licked a pencil. " We want the whole story, Dalton. Everything you can remember."

I couldn't think of anything to say, except that my name wasn't Dalton. I told him so.

" Funny. The other bloke gave your name as Dalton."

" What other bloke? "

" Fellow in the next ward. The other driver."

" Red, do you mean? Is he hurt too? "

" Broken nose. Now, let's see your licence. That'll tell us who you are."

The nurse found my licence and he copied all the particulars. Then he took my statement. When I got to the part about the crash, he stopped me.

" You say the patrol car ran into the back of the first lorry *before* you hit it? The other statement I have says that the car was stationary—that it had stopped—when you hit it, and that the force of the impact crushed it against the lorry in front."

" That's a lie," I said. " If Red told you that, he's lying."

He sighed; wrote something down. When he had finished, he gave me what he'd written to read and sign. I asked him what he thought would happen.

" You'll find out," he said, heaving himself up. " You'll find out soon enough."

When he had gone I lay back in a kind of sick panic. I couldn't think straight. Everything was haywire. Red was trying to cover himself. I had to get help—speak to someone. But I didn't know anyone.

I fretted and twisted about, and after a bit I was sick. They gave me something to put me to sleep.

When I came to, it was dark outside and the lights were on. I was sweating. I had had a dream. The matron or someone came in and asked me if I wanted to send a message to my wife. I thought about it for a bit and told her no.

She had hardly gone out of the door when it opened again and a guy stuck his head in.

" Dago! " I yelled out.

He slid over to the bed, looking around him. " Wotcher, mate." His face was worried, shifty-looking.

" Am I glad to see you! "

" Yes, well, I'd have been in before, only they wouldn't let me

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in till visiting-hours. I heard what happened. You've been and gone and bought it this time, mate, and no mistake."

"You heard—about the two cops?"

"Yes, the town's full of it. But it's you I'm thinking about. There's a buzz around that Red's left you holding the baby."

"He sold out on me."

"He'd sell out on his own mother. What did he do—pull up sharp and let the cops bash into him?"

"How did you know?"

He laughed. "I'm a good guesser." He looked at me with his lids at half-mast. He seemed to be trying to make up his mind about something.

"There's one point that's been puzzling me," I said. "He told the cops my name was Dalton."

"That's me."

"You! Then—then he thought I was you?"

"Could be. You had my lorry, didn't you? Maybe he hadn't heard about me jagging in. He's been trying to knock me off for a week. Yesterday he nearly did it. That's why I quit."

"But—aw, come off it. Guys just don't go around killing people." Dago worked me over with his eyes for a moment. He seemed to come to a decision.

"Look. The only reason I come here was I didn't like to see that beggar get you put away. I'm going to tell you something now. If you use it right, it might get you off. Only, I don't want to get mixed up in it, see. After I've told you, I'm pulling out of here and I ain't coming back."

I waited for him to go on. He drew a deep breath. "Red's a killer. He killed a speed cop up in Brum. I was working with him up there and I saw it happen. I never let on to nobody, because I mind my own business. But that don't seem to mean much to a bloke like Red. Ever since I've come here, he's been trying to knock me off in case I blab.

"Anyway, this cop was after him. Red stopped short, smashed the cop to pulp. You know what the law is—it's always the bloke behind's fault. Red said his cap blew off and he stopped for it. They found his cap in the road, all right. I seen him throw it there before he stood on his brakes. He got off scot-free."

I gave a sort of gasp. "Is he crazy? I mean, knocking off a cop just because he was following him!"

"You seen him drive, ain't you? If the cop had caught him, Red would probably have had his licence suspended. You know what that means to a haulage driver."

"Yeah, sure, but—"

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" Well, that's what he did. And now, if my guess is worth a tinker's cuss, he's done it again."

I stared at him. It felt like a big load had suddenly slid off my neck. But the next moment it was back on again.

" Yeah, but how can I ever make them believe that? "

" I dunno, mate. I've told you all I know. The rest is up to you! "

" But—but, you're my only witness. You can't just pull out and leave me."

" Sorry, mate. I got to."

" You don't understand, Dago. I'm a desperate guy. They'll book me for manslaughter. Get it? Manslaughter! If you won't stand up and tell what you know, I'm sunk."

" I've got a wife and kids to support—"

" So have I. What the hell's that to do with it? "

" I ain't got a licence," he almost shouted at me. " They suspended me last year up at Leeds. I've been driving for Hawlett's without one. What with that and me not telling the cops about what Red's done, I'll wind up inside for sure. I don't mind so much about that; but it's the wife and kids—"

I didn't listen to the rest. A cold feeling was creeping through me. I said angrily: " If it wasn't for you keeping quiet about Red, he wouldn't still be around and I wouldn't be in this jam. You're the guy responsible for all this. You ought to stick around and see it through."

It didn't work. He was scared stiff.

" I'll pay you," I said desperately. " I got a little money put by. It'll help keep your family alive while—"

" While I'm inside? And what happens when I come out? The cops'd be watching me. I'd have to lay off driving and that's the only job I know. No, mate. If you offered me five hundred quid in the clear, I might think about it."

" Damn you! " I said. " You, and Red, and Hawlett's—the whole damn lot of you—murderers, guys without licences, time-schedules that force drivers onto the wrong side of the law. I'd give my right arm to blow the top off this racket. Hell, if the public only knew about this! " I stopped suddenly. Dago had begun to shuffle towards the door.

" Hey, wait a minute! " I said. " Come back here. Brother, have I just thought of something! Dago, get to a phone. Ring one of the big London dailies. Tell them to send a reporter out here, pronto. Tell them I've got the inside dope on a racket that'll burn up every road-user and woman with kids in the country, and I'm offering them exclusive rights."

" You're barmy."

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"Believe me, they'd pay big money to get the dope on a well-known firm like Hawlett's. If you promise to stick around and see me through, I'll split fifty-fifty with you on everything I make."

He looked at me for a long spell.

Suddenly he stuck out his jaw. "O.K.," he said. "It's on. I'm with you."

What you just read was the story I gave them. They printed it the way I told it, word for word; said it would sound more real that way.

And, brother, you should have seen the way they lashed out with that dough!

They got Red for manslaughter, thanks to Dago and one little slip-up—Red hadn't been wearing a cap, so he hadn't got any explanation for why he stopped. As for Hawlett's—well, that affair is still going on. There's been a row in Parliament over it. I think they're going to pass an Act or something. Anyway, it's put a stop to their racket.

I guess that's about all there is to it. Except that we got our house. I've been decorating the nursery. Looks real good.

★ ★ ★

TOUR DE FORCE

I remember Mrs. Campbell telling me of an occasion when Duse came to England and wished to play *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* which Mrs. Campbell had decided to revive in London, and possibly later take on tour. New scenery had been painted, and Duse arrived in London to play—*Tanqueray*. Mrs. Campbell was dismayed, and still more so when Duse sent to ask if she would lend her the new scenery for her production. However, it was not in Stella Campbell to do things by half measures and she sent back a willing—or apparently willing—assent. She also stated that she would like to be present on the first night, and asked for a box.

The night came, Mrs. Campbell arrived at the theatre, and was asked to pay for her box. Of course, one must be fair and admit that this was no doubt an error on the part of Duse's manager, and that she in all probability knew nothing about it.

"A great success," Mrs. Campbell told me, "but Duse decided to play the part several times—and to use my scenery. She was magnificent, a *tour de force*, but I was—forced to tour."

NAOMI JACOB, *Me—Likes and Dislikes*

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PAWN TO DANGER

Smuggling to be worth while has to be two-way traffic

by ROBERT STANDISH

THE traveller going inward and northward from Ventimiglia, the point on the Mediterranean coast where France and Italy meet, soon comes to a wild, desolate region of high mountains, and torrent beds that are dry most of the year, where the vegetation is sparse and only goats can pick up a meagre living.

The region lies astride the Franco-Italian frontier and its only true significance is military. Some seven miles from the nearest motor road, accessible only by a hair-raising mule-track on the French side, and down a boulder-strewn ravine from the Italian side, is a steep and isolated valley known to its handful of inhabitants as the Brague. Very few outsiders have ever heard of it.

In the valley bottom there are a few acres of rich alluvial soil, which is well cultivated and provides some of the crops that would otherwise have to be carried long distances on muleback. On either side of the cultivated strip is some fair pasture-land. Its hay crop helps to keep about a hundred sheep and three cows through the winter, which clamps down in early December with alpine severity.

Nature is unkind in the Brague and if there were not other compensations, it is sure that the people would long ago have migrated to some more smiling region. The other compensations? We shall come to them.

On a blazing August day in the year 1947, a young man with a sunny smile, staggering under a pack that weighed nearly eighty pounds, picked his way carefully down the steep ravine leading from Italy. Presently, very near home, the young man stopped at the entrance of a limestone cave and, with a sigh of relief, discarded the heavy pack, and thrust it out of sight in the cave. He had travelled some fifteen miles that day over rough going.

At the top of the Bragüe, waiting for him in the shade of a gnarled wild olive, was a lovely girl, about seventeen years of age. She had full red lips, startling against an olive complexion, and shining black hair which reflected blue lights. They embraced, but did not speak at first. Gisella—for that was her name—produced from a basket some goat's-milk cheese, a flute of bread,

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and a bottle of wine, and sat back smiling while the other ate and drank.

" The load was too heavy, Mario," she said at length, her eyes dark with concern. " It is a life fit only for a dog—and it is said that the Customs men are armed with rifles."

" It is the only way a man can earn a living here," said Mario weakly, for he was near exhaustion. " The rocks and the wild thyme and the lavender are worth nothing—or shall I become a goatherd like that half-witted cousin of mine? "

When the sun had dropped behind the huge ridge, they went down into the valley of the Brague, pausing briefly to pray as the first notes of the angelus sounded from the old church tower below them.

" There is a letter for you, Mario," said Gisella. " My brother brought it for you when he came back from market. It is from America—and I think it is from Auguste."

Mario Gastaldi and Auguste Canova had been inseparable friends since earliest childhood. Despite Italian-sounding surnames, they were French citizens, and their forebears had been French for generations. They had tended sheep together, smuggled goods together back and forth between Italy and France, and when the time came to do their military service, were drafted to the same unit.

They came to the parting of the ways when Auguste, sponsored by an uncle who had prospered as a restaurateur in New York, migrated to America in 1946. Mario stayed behind. Gisella was one reason, while the other was his deep love for this wild mountain region.

Gastaldis had been smugglers since the time of Mario's great-grandfather, and perhaps before. Smuggling was in their blood. The previous day Mario had gone into Italy with an empty pack, for prices of most things were lower in Italy than in France. He had returned with his pack full of textiles, mostly Italian silks, which were at famine prices in France.

Smuggling, to be worth while, has to be a two-way traffic, for it is a business like any other. Railroads go bankrupt hauling empty freight cars.

When he had rested, Mario opened Auguste's letter. There were two pages of messages for Auguste's family, none of whom could read or write. But the remainder resolved all Mario's doubts:

. . . The enclosed bank draft for $250 will show you that I have prospered in America. You are wasting your time. Here we do not carry heavy packs over the mountains in all weathers. We have fast motor launches which meet ships at sea, comfortable cars, and

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an organization which makes me laugh at the way we used to do things in the Brague.

You, above all men, would do well here, for you would at once find favour with Rocco, who is my chief and an ardent chess-player.

Waste no time, Mario, but come to America. I will meet your ship and you will at once be among friends . . .

The letter was written in a strange mixture of French and Italian, together with a few words of patois, which were neither.

On old maps and documents the frontier was a torrent bed, which ran down the Brague, but since the torrent had changed its course twice in living memory, the exact line of demarcation was vague. Neither France nor Italy had bothered for nearly a century to make an issue of the matter, so the Brague had remained a kind of no-man's-land whose people did not think in terms of nationality. Smuggling was their chief industry and since this was on a small scale, they were left alone.

The Gastaldi house, where Mario was born, was considered to be in France, but it was a matter of no importance. Gisella, who lived some three hundred yards distant, thought of herself as living in Italy. But when these two married, it would be at the only church in the valley.

God, according to Father Garino, was more concerned with men's souls than with their identity papers.

Two days after receiving Auguste's letter, Mario presented himself at the American Consulate in Nice. "I wish to go to America," he announced. "I shall be ready to sail next week."

"You will be lucky if you sail six months from now," he was told. "There are many papers to be completed, and when these are completed, there are inquiries. If, after the inquiries are made, it is considered that you would be a good citizen, a visa will be granted."

"How do you suppose," asked Mario, after a brief study of the forms, "that I am going to find respectable people to vouch for my character? I do not know any respectable people. Ask me questions, if you will, and I swear to answer truthfully, but I will not waste time with all these papers."

Mario wrote to Auguste, telling him of the interview. Auguste replied by air mail:

I should have told you not to trouble with the American Consul. As you say, there are too many papers and questions. Furthermore, all the answers are recorded, so that if one should be unfortunate, the authorities know everything. It is better to come without papers. Then, as far as officials are concerned, one does not exist. How can the police find a man who does not exist?

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Go to your Uncle Pietro in Genoa. He will know how to advise you. America is a good country, but it would be better if there were fewer officials who waste the time of the people with printed forms.

Mario said good-bye to Gisella at the top of the valley. "In three years, when I have made a fortune, I will come back to marry you," he said.

"I will wait for you," she sobbed.

The parting was the hardest of all. Gisella watched Mario until he disappeared over a high ridge, which took him to the road which led to Turin.

He ate a late meal that night with Uncle Pietro in Genoa. Pietro Gastaldi went to America in 1914. In the 'twenties he made a small fortune bootlegging and returned to Italy. He had spent his youth in the Brague and had little patience with the bureaucratic passion for form-filling.

"It is a spider's web," he told Mario, "in which free men become slaves and at the end are drowned in printer's ink. I knew a consul once. They buried him with a rubber stamp clutched in his hand because they could not loosen his grip."

Mario sailed from the oil port of Savona in a tanker, whose chief steward was a Gastaldi connection by marriage. She was bound for Tampico, where Uncle Pietro's brother owned a restaurant. His son drove for a bus line that ran a service from Mexico City to Ciudad Juarez. Near El Paso a cousin of his drove a truck for a ranch whose southern limit was the frontier, and exactly sixteen days after leaving Savona, Mario ate his first meal in the United States.

This cousin was about to go on a visit to his mother, who lived in Mobile. There was a spare seat in the car. At a shrimp port on the Mississippi coast lived this cousin's brother-in-law, who owned a fast, refrigerated truck in which he hauled loads of shrimps to New York, a most profitable undertaking.

By dint of staying at the wheel for eighteen hours out of twenty-four—which was not only exhausting but highly illegal—he dropped Mario at the Fulton Street fish market in New York, introduced him to an Italian café-owner, and went to his hotel, where he slept round the clock. An hour later, thanks to a phone call put in by the Italian café-owner, Mario and his old boyhood friend, Auguste, were reunited.

Auguste introduced Mario to Rocco Costamagna, a flashily dressed man of nearly forty years of age, who looked rather like a sinister and somewhat dissipated Rudolph Valentino, and before Mario went to bed that night, having beaten Rocco Costamagna

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in three straight games of chess, and won his plaudits for the illegal entry into the United States, Mario was hired for unspecified duties under the banner of an organization which was giving the United States Customs a great deal of trouble.

" A man who plays chess like you do," said Rocco, " can think fast. I can use you. But keep those old-country clothes of yours and that innocent smile, and don't forget "—this said less amiably—" that this is a bad climate for people who do not know how to keep their mouths shut."

For the following weeks, Mario was under observation. From time to time, in the manner of one throwing a bone to a dog, Rocco would give him fifty dollars. Most evenings he played chess with Rocco.

" If I were you," counselled Auguste, " I would let Rocco win a few games."

" No," said Mario stoutly, " that I will not do. I know only how to play as well as I can. If I were to let him beat me, Auguste, Rocco would own my mind."

Events proved that Mario was right, for, in some subtle fashion which a chess-player will understand, he gained from the beginning a moral ascendancy over Rocco Costamagna.

Rocco, Auguste, Mario, and a surly Sicilian named Joe, went down to Florida in the late autumn. By this time Mario had learnt some English. He was close-mouthed without giving the appearance of reticence, obedient to orders without ever being servile.

The Florida headquarters was a lonely house on the Inland Waterway north of Miami. At the end of the garden, a motor cruiser, ostensibly for fishing, was moored. Twice and sometimes three times a week they went out fishing, but instead of returning at sunset, put out to sea, where they made rendezvous with strange craft.

Rocco handed over various packages to the men on the other craft. Sometimes it was only an envelope, at others large packing-cases. Once they carried a great many wooden boxes which weighed as heavily as lead. On the return journey they brought small parcels, weighing no more than ten or fifteen pounds, wrapped in waterproof wrappings.

From time to time they put out to sea in daylight and, when out of sight of land and other craft, put in a few hours of target practice with revolvers and sub-machine guns, which were kept in a paint locker.

" Against whom are these to be used? " Mario asked Auguste on the first occasion.

" Against anyone who interferes with us," replied Auguste.

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"Smuggling is one thing; killing is another," said Mario.

"It is better to kill than be killed," retorted the other.

One evening shortly after that, Rocco and Mario were playing chess on the verandah of the house. A big black sedan with five men in it swung into the drive. Rocco ran forward obsequiously to open the door.

The man who stepped out had, Mario thought, the coldest face he had ever seen. He was tall, heavy-jowled, and expressionless, with quick, dark eyes that seemed to take in everything at a glance. He was approaching sixty years of age. Followed by his bodyguard, he went into the house.

When he reappeared, he had discarded a black business suit and was wearing denim slacks and a gaudy beach shirt, in which he looked quite incongruous, for his skin was a dead white. He signed to Rocco and Mario to continue their game. He did not speak a word, but stood watching the play intently.

"This boy's good," he said at length. "After chow, we'll see how good."

"If you want to stay healthy," whispered Rocco a few minutes later, "you will let him win. He is"—and there was awe in his voice—"the Big Boy."

Once again Mario decided to follow his own judgment, and once again he was right. The Big Boy sent for him round ten o'clock that night. One of the bodyguard opened a rich leather case, made for travelling, and set out the most beautiful, hand-carved ivory chessmen Mario had ever seen. With the other's watchful eye on him, Mario handled a knight lovingly.

"Prove that you are a better player than I am," said the Big Boy, "and they are yours."

Chess was the Big Boy's only mental relaxation, his one passion. He became almost human while he played. He was good. Mario lost the first game. The other looked at him suspiciously, plainly wondering whether Mario had thrown the game away. Reading his thoughts, Mario shook his head.

"Good boy!" came the harsh voice. "Do not ever do that to me!"

Mario won the second game and the third. At 2 a.m. one of the bodyguard brought beer and sandwiches.

"Who taught you to play?" asked the Big Boy.

"My grandfather," replied Mario. "The winter evenings in the mountains are long. There is nothing else to do. When my grandfather died I used to play with the good Father Garino. There was a player for you! He never made a mistake. Or so it seemed. I gave up all hope of beating him."

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"Your grandfather, what was his name?" There was a bright light of interest in the Big Boy's usually expressionless eyes as he asked this.

"My grandfather—that is, my mother's father—was French," replied Mario, resenting the other's questioning. "His name was Béraud."

This was a lie. The Big Boy knew it was a lie, and Mario knew that the Big Boy knew it. There was a flash of anger in his eyes, and then he said calmly, "That accounts for your speaking Italian with a French accent."

"In France," said Mario, "they say I speak French with an Italian accent."

"Let me hear you," said the other.

"On the frontier," said Mario in French, "even the sheep-dogs speak two languages. Where do you come from?"

"Like you," said the Big Boy angrily, "I come from a land where it is considered bad manners to ask too many questions. Here"—he looked balefully at Mario—"it is worse than bad manners; it is dangerous."

"I shall remember that."

When daybreak came, Mario had won four games out of seven. "For the future," said the Big Boy, "you will attach yourself to me. I shall tell Rocco. You are good," he added, "but it is too soon to say that you are a better player than I am."

As one of the Big Boy's bodyguard, Mario travelled all over the United States, twice to Canada, and several times to Cuba, where the former maintained a palatial home. So far as Mario was concerned, there was no more smuggling. Subordinates like Rocco took the risks. The Big Boy controlled and co-ordinated the activities of the far-flung network.

The organization seemed to work so smoothly that sometimes it was hard to believe that its operations were illegal. Eighteen months passed swiftly for Mario, with never less than three hours daily devoted to chess. They played on trains, in cars travelling at high speed, on yachts, in hotels, and in the houses and apartments that the Big Boy maintained in New York, Los Angeles, Florida, Hot Springs, and Cuba.

Mario drew a salary of one hundred dollars weekly, but there was a tacit arrangement that when he beat his employer in three straight chess games on any one day, he received a bonus of five hundred dollars. But this did not happen often, and then only when the Big Boy was worried and had his mind on other things.

Almost every cent of Mario's earnings was deposited in an eastside New York bank that specialized in the accounts of Italian immigrants. Learning for the first time of the existence

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of such a thing as income tax, and recoiling in horror from the thought of paying it, Mario rented a safe-deposit box in Miami.

Two years after leaving the Brague, Mario wrote a letter to Gisella:

Carissima, It is almost too good to be true, but I have saved more than ten thousand dollars. Soon I shall come home to claim you as my wife. If you so much as smile at another man, I shall know it. As to my life here, it is better not to put such things in a letter . . .

Mario and Auguste met infrequently these days, but at about this time they spent three days together at the Big Boy's Florida house. Mario was curious, for he still knew nothing about the gang's operations except that parcels went in and out of the country under the noses of the Customs people.

" What is in these parcels? "

" A week ago, for asking that same question," replied Auguste, " a man went for a swim twenty miles from land with a lead weight tied to his feet. It is not safe to talk here. This evening, if you do not have to play chess, we shall go into town together."

The Big Boy was absent that evening.

" Auguste," said Mario as they sat drinking beer in a Fort Lauderdale bar some hours later, " me, I do not like murder. What is in those packages? "

" The parcels which we bring in contain drugs," replied Auguste. " Once some white powder was spilt from one aboard the launch. Rocco was in a panic, and we spent two days scrubbing and hosing where it fell. It was then that the wrong question was asked."

" Drugs! That is bad, Auguste," said Mario, his eyes dark with apprehension. " Some cigars, or some jewels, or some good Italian hams—those are nothing. But drugs—I do not like that."

" Cigars and hams would not pay for the petrol we use," said Auguste with a shrug. " Take my advice and obey orders. It is better that way."

" And what, think you, is taken out of America in those boxes and parcels? " Mario persisted. " Once, in New York I had to make a parcel of some drawings, designs, or something like that. They were on blue paper. What could that be? "

" Perhaps," said Auguste, looking round to make sure they were not overheard, " they were blueprints. The Russians, I am told, pay vast sums for blueprints of certain secret things."

" That, also, is bad," said Mario, " for the Russians have taken the land away from the peasants."

" You are no longer a stupid peasant, Mario," said Auguste, laughing.

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With these words, although he did not know it, Auguste ruptured the lifelong friendship with Mario. Nothing would ever be the same between them. Mario, with generations of the lawless traditions of the Brague behind him, was prepared to go on evading Customs duties for the rest of his life. Why not? There was no shame in that.

The shame, if any, attached itself to the Customs, who levied duties which put the necessities of life out of the reach of poor people. Even Father Garino, as stern and upright a man as ever lived, did not expect the peccadillo of smuggling to be included in a confession. Indeed, he had been heard to say that payment of Customs duty spoilt the flavour of wine and tobacco.

Mario was a simple and relatively ignorant man. He had not scrupled to come to America illegally, because he regarded printed forms as unwarrantable intrusions on human liberty. But drugs which destroyed men's souls, and the betrayal of secret matters to Russia, these were on an altogether different moral plane and his code could not permit them.

America was rich. A few thousand dollars in Customs duties, one way or the other, made no difference, and it was all part of the game. But in these two years Mario had grown to love America. He had made more money in these years than he would have made during his whole life at home. But drugs and treachery, no.

"I suppose you are right, Auguste," said Mario, conscious that they had been walking on wafer-thin ice.

This was the last talk these two old friends ever had. Two nights later, with the powerful fishing-cruiser slamming her way through a choppy sea, Auguste lost his footing and fell overboard. Rocco, who was in command, left him to his fate. Mario, who heard the news in the morning, said nothing, but hardened his resolve to break with the organization that treated human life so lightly.

Back in New York a week later, Mario laid his plans with care. At a pawnshop on Third Avenue near Tenth Street he bought a money-belt to wear next to his skin.

Then he withdrew his entire balance from the bank in fifty- and one-hundred-dollar denominations. The safe-deposit box in Miami he had already emptied.

The realization had dawned slowly on him that he would not be permitted, when the fancy seized him, to leave the smuggling ring at will. He could not resign. To allow the Big Boy or his subordinates to gain a glimpse of what was in his mind was to sign his own death-warrant.

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That night, in the Big Boy's penthouse overlooking the Hudson, Mario played chess with his life at stake. The Big Boy had uncanny perceptions, which helped him to sense danger before it was imminent. So Mario thrust from his mind all the tumultuous thoughts which lurked there, and concentrated as never before upon the game at hand.

Even so, the Big Boy sensed something. "What is on your mind Mario?" the Big Boy asked, having won two out of three games.

"I have toothache," replied Mario. "Dentists scare me, but I must see one tomorrow."

"Yes, Mario," said the older man, with a cryptic smile, "see your dentist tomorrow. In this life a man needs strong teeth and claws."

On the following afternoon, carrying a small valise, Mario alighted from a taxi at the Fulton Street fish market, where he had a rendezvous with the same driver who had brought him northward. "I am leaving in ten minutes," said the driver.

Putting the case in the cab of the truck, Mario went to telephone. His hand trembled with sheer terror as he dialled the Big Boy's private number.

"It is Mario," he said, as the other's harsh voice replied. "I am going away, and I am not coming back."

"Why tell me that?" said the other.

"I know the evil things which are in the packages," said Mario, "and I will have nothing more to do with them. But I want you to know that I am not a traitor. I shall not betray you."

"It is too late, Mario. You know too much. Like a fool, you have admitted it. I have a long arm and wherever you may go I can find you."

"I do not think so," replied Mario.

The Big Boy's voice took on a warmth Mario had never heard before, "Do not do this foolish thing, Mario. Do not compel me to kill you. I need you."

"That was a threat," said Mario. "I shall now write down everything I know and put it in a safe place. It will be better to let me live. We had good games together, but this is stalemate. Good-bye!"

"Are the cops after you?" asked the driver, who noticed that until they were clear of the city Mario kept his face covered.

"No, but the black knight threatens my king."

"I think you're crazy!"

Then, illegally as he had come, Mario recrossed the Rio Grande and made his way down to Tampico, where his uncle made him

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welcome. The forged passport which the Big Boy had provided for him might have left a trail, so Mario burnt it before leaving New York.

Mario had a strange awareness of danger. It was almost a smell in his nostrils. Since his boyhood he had possessed the alertness of a wild animal. It had served him well on the remote alpine trails, and now, with the dangers of life multiplied a hundredfold, it would serve him again.

During many months of close association with the Big Boy, although he had hardly ever witnessed violence, it had been plain that violence was implicit in every order given in the leader's harsh, authoritarian voice. Every man in that smooth-working organization knew, without being told, that swift and terrible violence awaited the man who was fool enough to break or even question the unwritten laws of gangdom.

The fact of being in Mexico gave no sense of security. There might be none in Europe until he found himself once more in the Brague amid the old familiar scenes with the encircling wall of the mountains shutting out the thrusting world beyond.

So Mario with his uncle's help retraced his steps. Tampico to Savona, then westward along the coast and up the narrow valley to the mule-trail that led to Gisella. Then, it seemed, with her arms around him, that he had never left home and all the rest was a dream.

During the days before their wedding, little by little, omitting nothing, Mario told his story to Gisella, who could not grasp it in its entirety. All the wickedness she understood was on a small scale, so the personality of the Big Boy did not assume reality. Indeed, there were times when she was tempted to believe that Mario was weaving fairy tales. But the $10,000 was real, perhaps the only reality there was.

" If this man is as bad and as rich and as powerful as you believe, Mario," she said, " even here we are not safe."

" If we are not safe here," said Mario, " believe me, it would be folly to run away. Here a stranger is rare. He is at once a marked man and "—he said this proudly—" no man can frighten me away from my own home."

The leaves had fallen and there was the smell of snow in the air on the day when Mario and Gisella were married. The whole valley turned out to wish them well. After the wedding feast, Mario took his bride to the small stone house in which five generations of Gastaldis had been born.

There followed days and weeks of blissful contentment, marred for Gisella by haunting fears, for the Big Boy was beginning to

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assume the mantle of reality for her. He loomed in the background of consciousness like some ferocious wild beast, ready to spring.

Mario had never understood America, for he had never probed below the surface of life. Nearly all his associates had been criminals, while he himself had lived outside the law with impunity, so his picture was badly out of focus.

The Big Boy—Mario never knew his name—who had seemed all-powerful in America, was now becoming dwarfed in perspective. It seemed inconceivable, after a few months in the Brague, that the Big Boy had any validity.

The latter knew that Mario came from a border valley and that he played chess. But there were many valleys, and in them many who played chess to while away the long winter evenings, and he doubted the ability of the gang-leader to find him or, having found him, to implement his threats.

Here Mario underrated the Big Boy, whose long tentacles reached into Naples, Genoa, and Marseilles, in any one of which were plenty of hireling assassins whose fee was a tenth of the tariff ruling in America.

So Mario lived happily in his fool's paradise, and before their son was born, he had lulled Gisella's fears. With some capital behind him, Mario now planned to resume the career of contrabandist, but on a bigger scale and with more up-to-date methods. North towards the Swiss frontier, so gossip had it, a smart man with some capital could do well.

It was at this time, while Mario was making plans to investigate the possibilities of the new venture, that events threatened to end the age-old isolation of the Brague. A new road was about to be built on the French side. A Parisian syndicate announced the intention of building a 400-room winter-sports hotel in the valley. Mario owned a large tract of hitherto almost worthless land. On the rumours alone the value had leapt.

Father Garino, with whom Mario discussed his future plans quite frankly, took the view that illegality was excusable only when it was impossible to make a living within the law, and that Mario should sell a choice hotel site in order to bring prosperity to the valley.

"I do not like the idea of too many strangers here," said Mario.

"You still fear the vengeance of your former associates in America? Is that it?"

Mario nodded.

"I cannot but believe," continued Father Garino, "that your fears are groundless. You have had plenty of time to betray them, if betrayal were your intention, while they, if it were their

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intention to find and kill you, have had plenty of time to do so. There are not so many Mario Gastaldis who live on the frontier and who play chess as well as you do. A man with money and patience would have found you long since. No, Mario, I counsel you to forget your fears. Your duty is to help banish poverty here where you were born."

While the Parisian syndicate was making up its mind, winter again clamped down on the Brague. The snow was late in coming, but the cold was intense.

One evening a few days before Christmas, while Father Garino and Mario were playing chess, word came that a stranger had arrived in the valley and was asking for the priest. He had made the journey from France on muleback, accompanied by a baggage mule.

He was now lying, desperately ill, probably with pneumonia, at a house about two miles distant. Father Garino set out at once. Despite his age, he could cover great distances on foot in all weathers.

In the morning it was common knowledge that the stranger was dead. As was the local custom, volunteers, of whom Mario was one, came forward to dig the stranger's grave in the frozen ground, and because it was not seemly that a stranger should be buried without the proper observances, most of the men attended the funeral.

When the simple ceremony was over, Father Garino called Mario into his house. "I have a gift for you," he said, his face grey with grief. "Why, Mario, did you not tell me that while in America you knew my brother?"

"Because I did not know him," replied Mario indignantly.

"That is strange," said the old priest thoughtfully, "for he brought you a gift—and a message."

"And the message?" asked Mario.

"'Tell Mario Gastaldi,' he said a little time before he died, 'that he plays a better game than I do.' They were almost the last words he uttered. As I thought he would, my young brother returned at the end."

Father Garino handed a parcel to Mario. It was wrapped in waterproof canvas. It contained a leather case in which was a set of hand-carved ivory chessmen.

★ ★ ★

The art of taxation consists in so plucking the goose as to procure the greatest quantity of feathers with the least possible amount of hissing.

W. SMART, *Taxation of Ground Values*

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HEART'S DESIRE

Love must kiss that mortal's eyes
Who hopes to see fair Arcady

HENRY CUYLER BUNNER, *The Way to Arcady*

Put your hand on my heart, say that you love me as
The woods upon the hills cleave to the hills' contours.

I will uphold you, trunk and shoot and flowering sheaf,
And I will hold you, root and fruit and fallen leaf.

E. J. SCOVELL, *A Betrothal*

Waking Dream

All her awakenings were full of wonder, but there was one that she remembered above all the rest. It happened on a day of excessive heat when the house, the trees, the hills themselves lay stupefied beneath the sun, and the flowers drooped their heads, made drunk by their own perfume and the heavy air. The garden was quiet save for the murmur of an ancient fountain that played furtively within a pool—whispering to itself, maybe, of the fine plumes and crystals it had worn in its youth—and there was no wind to cool the cedar's breath or lift a corner of the vast canopy the walnut tree had spread over the terrace; only the sycamores swung, from time to time, a solitary leaf, as though to testify that they yet watched beside their drowsing fellows.

Oppressed by the heat, the scent, the silence, Lady Taveridge sank into a light slumber wherein she fancied she still heard the fountain's murmur, still saw the weight of sunlight on the garden, the density of shade in which she lay, still felt her lover's presence by her side.

She slept, and dreamed the odour of the walnut trees was changed into a cloud of petals that hung suspended in the darkness and then fell softly one by one.

The touch of them waked her, and she turned to find Safir kneeling by the couch, his hands filled with the blossoms of lilac and jasmine that he had stripped from off their branches and now poured down upon her face and hair.

In after years she had but to close her eyes to feel again the tender, sweet-smelling stream, and to see the look of wonderment that Safir bent to hers.

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He did not kiss her, but when his load of flowers was all spent leaned nearer and caressed her face with gentle, almost timid fingers. And presently he laid his cheek against her neck and they stayed so, silently and without moving, for a long while.

HELEN BEAUCLERK, *The Green Lacquer Pavilion*

Waiting

After the broken threads of rain,
I drop in warm corn amid the poppies
and scatter the beads that have done showering.

My lover comes down like a weathercock,
clean and burnished by the winds:
a bell tolls while he looks for me.

Ey! his coat is smart and his cheeks rosy:
he wears a poppy in his hat.
I tremble as he climbs the stile.

He looks for me by ditch and hedge,
(his hands hang down, their toil dropped out,)
in long grass, docks and fern and brambles,

in hay-riff, mint, and stinging-nettles!
he looks for me, but he cannot find me . . .
Then O! he sees me, spidered in the corn!

and laughing, leaps to lift me up
and thrust away my waiting threads
and free me from my lonely bond.

MORRIS COX, *The Whirligig*

White and Red

. . . You are whiter than the swan on the swampy lake, you are whiter than the white sea-gull of the stream, you are whiter than the snow on the lofty peaks, you are whiter than the love of the angels of Heaven.

You are the lovely red rowan that calms the wrath and anger of all men, like a wave of the sea from flood to ebb, like a wave of the sea from ebb to flood . . .

Scottish Gaelic; traditional folk charm, from A Celtic Miscellany, by Kenneth Hurlstone Jackson

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Chagrin d'Amour

Rain-haunted flower-bloom why is your soul sad?
Dark trees enhance your dark beauty lovesick.
Shall I sing soft songs redolent of sunshine,
Windweary moonflower?

Love-flower, loveless, softly in the twilight
Winds from the mountains fan the forests blooming,
Darkly deciduous, misty in the moonshine,
Tremulous flower-rose.

JOHN EVELYN, *To a Chinese Girl*

Declaration

Their course lay by a wild but winding path through a gradual and wooded declivity. While they were yet in this craggy and romantic woodland, the big fervent drops began to fall. Coningsby urged Edith to seek at once a natural shelter; but she, who knew the country, assured him that the fishing-cottage was close by, and that they might reach it before the rain could do them any harm . . . The drops became thicker. They reached, at a rapid pace, the cottage. Coningsby found a rough garden seat for Edith. The shower was now violent.

Coningsby, after repeatedly watching the shower with Edith, and speculating on its progress, which did not much annoy them, had seated himself on a log almost at her feet. And assuredly a maiden and a youth more beautiful and engaging had seldom met before in a scene more fresh and fair. Edith on her rustic seat watched the now blue and foaming river, and the birch trees with a livelier tint, and quivering in the sunset air; an expression of tranquil bliss suffused her beautiful brow, and spoke from the thrilling tenderness of her soft dark eye.

Coningsby gazed on that countenance with a glance of entranced rapture. His cheek was flushed, his eye gleamed with dazzling lustre.

She turned her head; she met that glance, and, troubled, she withdrew her own.

"Edith!" he said in a tone of tremulous passion. "Let me call you Edith! Yes," he continued, gently taking her hand, "let me call you my Edith! I love you!"

She did not withdraw her hand; but turned away a face flushed as the impending twilight.

BENJAMIN DISRAELI, *Coningsby*

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HURRICANE SEASON

The waves gathered new fury as they thundered down the beach

by EDGAR MITTELHOLZER

SINCE early morning the air had been calm, oppressive, and the wind, whenever it did blow, seemed to come from all directions at once. It came in hot, brief gusts, as though afraid to commit itself, or as though it were the breath of some monster whose throat were being pressed upon at jerky intervals by a giant thumb. The sea, under the overcast sky, pounded continuously on the pebbly beach, hoarse and angry, one breaker curling, high and crested, after the other in quick succession. The white pebbles of coral that strewed the beach clicked and rattled as the hissing foam rushed furiously over them.

Old Jacob Everett had lit a fire so that he could watch the smoke and tell how the wind was blowing. The smoke kept whisking this way and that, a purposeless ghost that often would insinuate itself into the rickety, two-roomed hut and cause Mother Everett to cough. Whenever it did this, Mother Everett would put her head out of the tiny window of the back room and scold her husband—scold him in a voice that lacked confidence, for she had long resigned herself to the fact that he was a self-willed man upon whom scoldings had no effect.

"Why you don't come insoide, ole man? Is what you t'ink you doing? You can't stop God's works . . . Ole fisherman loike you so 'fraid de wedder. Shame 'pon you, Jacob! You doting too bad in you' ole age! Ef hurricane come to-noight it's de will of Jehovah. Put out de fire. De smoke choking up me pore lungs."

Everett, as usual, took no notice. He kept the fire going with odd pieces of anything he collected along the seashore. Coconut branches the sea had washed up and half buried in the sand, seaweed dried crisp by the sun, twigs and dead leaves from under the sea-grape trees and the manchineels and tall casuarinas that lined the shore, coconut shells, and even an old boot.

As he watched the smoke, which would be sometimes grey-blue and sometimes dark brown, the tint of his troubled face, he shook his head and mumbled to himself that it looked bad. "Dis look very bad."

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Every hurricane season—from the beginning of July to the end of September—for the past three years, he had suffered from this fear, and Mother Everett blamed it on two things—" ole age doting " and Francis.

Francis, their youngest son, was a brilliant boy, and with the help of his sister Doris, who had married a schoolteacher, he had got a secondary education, and was now a teacher himself. He came often to the fishing village to see his parents, but Mother Everett said half jokingly that it was an evil day when he had brought " dat big black book some few years back."

The big black book she meant was one of a pile Francis had been taking home with him; he lived with Doris and her husband farther along the coast. He had just come from the Public Library in Bridgetown, six miles away, and his father had said proudly: " Well, look dis! Boy, you mean tell we you studying all dem big books? Heh! "

And Mother Everett had grunted and said between sucks at her clay pipe: " Dis island o' Barbados na able hold Francis when he done study all dem books, you hear what Oi says, Jacob."

Then Francis, embarrassed and trying to be modest, had changed the subject by remarking: " Something in this one moight interest you, Papa. Remember we used to talk about hurricanes and how Barbados never had one for more than a hundred years? Well, this book is a history of Barbados. A man called Schomburgk wrote it, and it describe the two biggest hurricanes we ever had there. Long, long time ago. One happen in 1780 and the other in 1831."

Francis had read aloud to them the vivid accounts of the two great hurricanes, and old Everett had nodded and groaned and grunted, absorbed and deeply impressed: " Red sky. Yes. Oh yes. Oi always did hear say red sky mean trouble in de heavens. My fadder téll me so plenty toime."

But Mother Everett had laughed. " All you fishermen, you always says dat! Red sky mean rain and t'under-lightning. How much red sky me ain' see since I was a girl and no rain and t'under-lightning come—much less hurricane! "

But Everett never forgot what Francis had read from the history book.

" See how the wind blow," he muttered to himself, watching the smoke this day in August. " Dis way now, dat way now. Variable. Same as de big book Francis read from say. Francis tell me what de word mean, and it was de very word de book use. Variable. Wind blow variable in 1831, de day before de big

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hurricane break. And it was a August day loike today wid de sea rough and de sky overcast. Yes, dis look bad. Dis look very bad."

His gaze shifted over to the hut, and took note, perhaps for the fifth or sixth time that day, of its condition. The shingles he had nailed to the walls more than thirty years ago were grey and ragged at the edges; some of them were askew, some falling out. On the roof the corrugated iron was a red-brown hue—the colour of the shingles when they had been new. But this red-brown was the red-brown of rust. At night before he fell asleep, he would listen to sections of the corrugated iron flapping screechily in the wind. It leaked in two or three places. He had stopped leaks more times than he could count during the past ten years.

In his fancy he could see the whole flimsy structure toppling off its foundation of coralline limestone blocks, could see the waves—waves twenty feet high—smashing down upon the rotten walls from which cockroaches and centipedes scurried. The history book from which Francis had read had said that during a hurricane the sea rose and pounded the beach with huge waves. What hope would there be for this hut if the sea rose and the wind turned into a hundred-mile-an-hour gale?

Somehow, he did not fear death. It was the loss of the hut that worried him. It was the one thing that had always meant security in his life. He and Mother Everett had built it with their own labour and their own tools over thirty years ago, when his own parents had been alive. To lose this hut would be to feel as exposed as a snail would without its shell.

That was what Mother Everett did not understand. She thought he was afraid for his life. Why should he be when he and his fishing-boat had battled through so many murderous seas and merciless squalls? It was true that now, at seventy-one, his fishing days were over; Doris and Francis helped him along with an allowance every month, and James and Harry helped, too, when they could; James and Harry, not having clever brains like Francis, had done like their father and become fishermen. Yes, his fishing days were over, but that didn't mean he had turned into a coward. Why, he was even convinced there was no storm that could kill him.

No, it was the hut. "Dis hut," he muttered, turning his gaze out upon the sea. The waves had a purplish-grey tint under the dull sky. Yesterday, in the sunshine, they had looked such a bright, cheerful blue . . . .

"What we will do if dis hut get smash up?"

As the afternoon progressed, the sky became blacker, and in

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the south and south-east thunder muttered frequently. Hurricanes always approached from the south or south-east and travelled north-east or north-west.

The wind, after four o'clock, increased in strength and came definitely from a south-easterly direction. Sometimes it veered to the south, but at no time did it come from the north-east. Another bad sign, Everett noted. When the north-east trades were blowing there was little chance of a hurricane. The trades brought fine weather.

At five o'clock, rain began to fall in large, coarse drops, and Everett's fire hissed and went out. He retired into the hut for the meal Mother Everett had been calling him since three o'clock to come and eat. Two three-cent loaves of bread and a cup of hot water mixed with a teaspoonful of sweetened condensed milk. The third and last meal of the day. This morning at seven it had been exactly the same: two three-cent loaves and a cup of hot water with condensed milk.

As Everett ate, he remembered something Mr. Franklin, the village grocer, had said a few months ago. Mr. Franklin had told a customer he had read in the newspaper that people all over the island were advised to put in a big stock of foodstuffs in July in the event of a hurricane.

Old Everett had shaken his head and uttered a moan to himself. Poor people like himself could barely find rice and potato and bread and milk from day to day. How could the newspaper advise them to put in a big stock of foodstuffs? That advice was for the rich people: the big sugar-planters and the merchants and their families in Bridgetown—and the civil servants and the holiday people who came to Barbados.

Another piece of advice Mr. Franklin said the newspaper gave was that when a hurricane warning was sounded people should board up their windows and doors with good lumber—not just any kind of lumber, but good lumber. Old Everett had groaned again on hearing this. People like himself didn't even have bad lumber, much less good lumber. If he had had lumber of any kind at all, he would have used it to repair the hut, not to board up windows and doors.

The rain grew fiercer, and drummed loud on the corrugated-iron roof. Mother Everett brought an enamel basin from the back room to set down on the floor near the old bamboo table, and the basin at once began to give out sharp ping-ping sounds as the rain leaked into it in slow, big drops. Everett listened, but he could hear only rain. The wind seemed to have died down.

Mother Everett sat in the rocking-chair, her ragged Bible lay in her lap, her lips moving as she read. Her sight was perfect.

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Every afternoon at this time, bad weather or good, she read her Bible. This afternoon she had lit a stump of candle and stood it on the table beside her chair, for with the wooden shutters closed against the rain, the hut was as dark as though it were after sundown.

Everett finished his meal, and remained seated on the box that served him as chair—the rocker was the only authentic chair in the hut—staring at the floor and still pondering on the weather. He waved his hand before his face. This heat was another very bad sign. Since early morning—long before the sun had come up—the heat had begun.

Suddenly he glanced up. The rain had stopped—abruptly and ominously. There was still no wind. Why had the wind died away like that?

The sea continued its riotous crashing roar on the beach, and far away he heard a prattling roll of thunder. Rising, he opened the door, and Mother Everett glanced up and said: "You going outside mek more smoke, Jacob? Why you don't stan' insoide, ole man?"

"Going watch de wedder, Susan. It looking bad, girl. Very bad."

"You say dat two weeks back, and nutting happen."

"It wasn't so bad as dis. To-day Oi see all de soigns, Susan. Jest as Francis read from dat big book. Hurricane coming for sure tonoight."

Groaning, he went outside. The sea-grape trees dripped solemnly, and the huge manchineel trees, farther along the beach, looked frowning and threatening, as though thunder were concealed in their dense foliage. They bore poisonous berries. Berries you even had to be careful not to tread on with bare feet, for the juice in them caused blisters. As a boy, his parents had often warned him to be careful of them. As a boy . . . Such a long time ago that was.

In 1808 he went on a trip in a schooner as a deck-hand. They touched Dominica, St. Lucia, Antigua. And when he came back his father, he remembered, told him that a big storm had struck Barbados while he was away. Not a real hurricane, but nearly a hurricane. The wind had uprooted a few trees and knocked down some huts here and there. He had been so disappointed that he had been out of the island and had missed the experience. Stupid fool that he was then . . . He came to a halt.

The sky in the west and the south was slowly turning a deep crimson. The blue-grey thunderclouds moving slowly towards the north-west stood out dramatically against this background

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of crimson. Large fans of crimson splayed out upward to the zenith, and gradually, as he watched, began to infect the thunder-clouds, whose edges grew pink and then mauve, and this mauve spread and spread until the very depths of the clouds were aglow with a sombre, regal, purplish red.

A gust of wind came puffing from the south-east, hot and making a drone in his ears. But now it was not the wind that troubled him. It was the sky. A red sky.

He sank down onto the damp earth and held his head in his hands. Now it was only a matter of waiting. Now he must resign himself and take what was coming. God's works . . . "You can't stop God's works," Susan had said. So he waited.

Darkness fell, the crimson fading from the sky. He could hear thunder rumbling in the distance again. From the south-east. Some large drops of rain fell, but only sparsely, and not for long. The wind died away entirely. The heat increased—and the oppressiveness. The heat seemed like a mesh around him. Mother Everett called twice, but he took no heed. Would not even answer. The heat had him trapped so that, whether he had wanted to or not, he could not have moved.

He must sit here and wait . . . God's works . . . The sea darkened, and the waves seemed to gather a new agitation, a new fury, as they thundered down on the beach. He listened to the swishing prattle of the pebbles at each onslaught.

The sky shut down upon the land and the sea, hanging heavier and heavier, like a black, furry carcass laden with moist death.

He sat without moving. Sleep, after a while, made him nod. And Mother Everett called again and again. But he did not move. He could feel the salty, sticky spray from the sea damp against his face and arms, as it billowed across the short stretch of grassy land that separated him from the beach. He continued to wait, nodding off and on as sleep bore down like the clouds upon him.

And after one of these nodding spells—it seemed a long one—he woke and shook his head, and saw that the sea had taken on a phosphorescent look. Each wave came clear and crested through the darkness, glittering blue-green. It was weird. Terrible and weird. At least, it was so until he looked up and saw a half-moon in the sky, inclined to the west. It was the moon, then, that made the waves look phosphorescent.

Funny, he thought, that the moon should be shining. He looked around and saw stars. Scorpio was sinking in the west—not far from the moon. Everywhere he looked there were stars. In the north and in the south, and in the east as well as in the west. And the air was very cool.

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Behind him, the hut was in darkness. Mother Everett must have gone to bed. He rose and looked around again to make quite sure.

Not a cloud in the sky, except a few wisps low down on the horizon. And the wind seemed to have shifted back to the north-east. The good, kindly, cooling trade winds. Portent of fine weather.

★ ★ ★

EARLY TO BED

A story in much demand was that of "little Winston," whose Nannie had left on a well-earned holiday. The exuberant and exacting little boy of five was entrusted to the care of his mother, Lady Randolph Churchill (a friend of my mother's), who little realized what she was in for until night fell . . .

It began with Hunt the Thimble, which led to Hunt the Slipper. Puss in the Corner was somewhat of an effort; Pirates were followed by Red Indians, which were followed by rebellion on the part of Lady Randolph, who, as the clock struck two, sank unnerved and exhausted on her bed.

"Winston," she gasped, "you are impossible!"

"Yes, indeed," endorsed the portentous child. "*A miserable business for both!*"

VIOLET TREFUSIS, *Don't Look Round*

★ ★ ★

ANSWERS to PRIVATE EYE

on page 26

1. *Simon Templar, known as the Saint, in the thrillers of Leslie Charteris.*
2. *Mrs. Lestrange Bradley, who appears in the detective stories of Gladys Mitchell.*
3. *Peter Death Bredon Wimsey—Lord Peter Wimsey—in the stories by Dorothy L. Sayers.*
4. *Captain Hugh (Bulldog) Drummond, whose adventures are recounted by "Sapper."*
5. *Hercule Poirot, Agatha Christie's Belgian detective.*
6. *Gervase Fen, the Professor whose casês are described by Edmund Crispin.*
7. *Albert Campion, who frequently assists Inspector Stanislaus Oates in the cases chronicled by Margery Allingham.*
8. *Sir Henry Merrivale, in the detective thrillers of Carter Dickson.*

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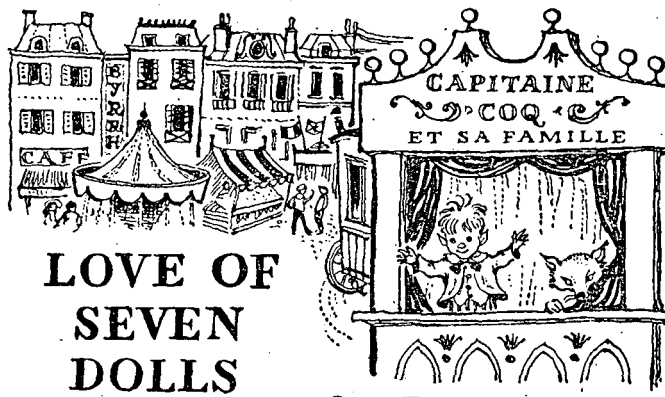

LOVE OF SEVEN DOLLS

by Paul Gallico

THE real name of the man who billed himself as Capitaine Coq was Michel Peyrot, and he was bred out of the same gutters of Paris that in an earlier age had spawned Villon.

His had been a life without softness or pity. He had never known his father. When he was six, his mother, who earned her living on the street, was murdered. Michel was taken in by a carnival family. His foster-mother, a worn-out soubrette, augmented her income by obliging clients behind the tent after the performance: his foster-father was a fire-eater in the show and was rarely sober.

When Michel was twelve, the fire-eater engaged in a duel with a rival from another fair, but being drunk, miscalculated the amount of petrol he could store in his cheeks to blow out from his mouth in flames. Swallowing some, which became ignited simultaneously, he died horribly of internal combustion. His wife did not survive him long, and at thirteen, Michel was again alone in the world.

By the time he was fifteen, he was a little savage practised in all the cruel arts and swindles of the street fairs and cheap carnivals. Now, at thirty-five, he was handsome in a rakish way, with wiry, reddish hair, wide-spaced grey eyes in a pale face, and a virile, crooked nose—wrinkled still further by a blow that had flattened it during a brief experiment with pugilism—which, with a sensuous mouth, gave him something of the look of a satyr.

Throughout his life no one had ever been kind to him, or gentle, and he paid back the world in kind. Wholly cynical, he had no regard or respect for man, woman, child, or God. Not at any time he could remember in his thirty-five years of existence had he ever

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In his poignant story of Mouche, the young French waif, who finds happiness and horror, strangely mingled; when she joins the company of Capitaine Coq, Paul Gallico pulls at the heart-strings as surely as the Capitaine manipulates his lively and lovable puppets.

loved anything or anyone. He looked upon women as conveniences that his appetite demanded, and after he had used them, abandoned them or treated them badly.

Why he had picked up the thin, wretched bit of flotsam known as Mouche he could not have told. Indeed, he would have insisted that it was not he at all who had added her to his queer family, but the members of that group themselves, Carrot Top, Monsieur Reynardo, Madame Muscat, and Monsieur Nicholas, who had made the decision.

For although it was he who sat behind the one-way curtain in the booth, animated them, and supplied their seven voices, the puppets frequently acted strangely and determinedly as individuals over whom he had no control. Michel had never bothered to reflect greatly over this phenomenon, but had simply accepted it as something that, far from interfering with the kind of life he was accustomed to living, brought him a curious kind of satisfaction.

Growing up with the people of the carnival acts, Michel had learned juggling, sword-swallowing, and leaping on the trampoline, but it was in ventriloquism that he became the most proficient.

The lives of the puppets had begun when Michel Peyrot was a prisoner of the Germans during the war, and in their camps had a kind of post-graduate course in all that was base in human nature.

In this evil period of an evil life he first carved and clad the seven puppets, brought them to life for the entertainment of his fellow prisoners, and made the discovery that more and more they refused to speak the obscenities and vulgarities that make soldiers laugh, but instead were becoming individuals with lives of their own.

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During those times when he sat hidden in the puppet booth, Michel Peyrot was not, but the seven were. Golo, the derelict Senegalese, understood this paradox perfectly. To him it was simply the primitive jungle magic by which his spirit was enabled to leave the body and enter into other objects which then became imbued with his life. But there was yet another manifestation of which Michel Peyrot was unaware; that, in the scheme of creation, it was not possible for a man to be wholly wicked and live a life entirely devoted to evil.

If Carrot Top, Gigi, and Ali the Giant were restoring to him the childhood of which he had been robbed, or Reynardo, Dr. Duclos, Madame Muscat, and Monsieur Nicholas the means by which he could escape from himself, Michel was not consciously aware of it. Often he was cynically amused at the things done and the sentiments expressed by his creations, for they were completely foreign to him.

Yet the habit of the puppet booth grew, and when the war ended and he returned to France, Michel Peyrot became Capitaine Coq, and with Golo, whom he had found starving in the prison camp, as slave, orchestra, and factotum, he took to the road.

The last night of the fair by the Porte de Neuilly in Paris, it had been the experienced and cynical eye of Capitaine Coq that had instantly detected the despairing slope of the shoulders, and the blind, suicide walk of Mouche, the unhappy girl with the straw valise, but it had been Poil de Carotte, the puppet with the red hair and pointed ears, who had saved her, for Coq would not have given a fig for a whole troupe of despairing girls marching in single file into the Seine. But it amused him to let Carrot Top and the others deal with the girl as they wished.

Nevertheless, once the strange little play had begun and the seven had proceeded independently with their work of capturing her, Coq's sharp showman's instincts had been quick to recognize the value of this trusting child speaking seriously and with complete belief across the booth to the inhabitants thereof.

Whoever or whatever she was, Mouche was possessed of that indefinable something that bridges the gap separating audience and performer and touches the heart of the beholder. He had noted her effect upon the hardened crowd of pitch-men, labourers, and fellow rascals who had gathered about his booth. If the girl could be taught to work thus spontaneously with his puppet family, standing out in front of the counter, she might become a definite business asset. If not, he could always abandon her.

But there was one more quality in her that had attracted him, as he had peered through the scrim of the blind curtain and seen her pinched shoulders, hollow cheeks, dark unhappy eyes, and snow-white, blue-veined temples beneath the short black hair—or rather, that had exasperated him and roused all the bitterness and hatred of which he had so great a supply.

This was her innocence and essential purity. Capitaine Coq was the mortal enemy of innocence. It was the one trait in human

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beings, man or woman, boy or girl, that he could not bear. He would, if he could, have corrupted the whole world.

In the back of the car, Mouche slept the sleep of mental and physical exhaustion. When she awoke, it was morning, and she was alone. All the panic of the night before returned overwhelmingly, and she sprang from the machine, looking about her fearfully.

But the bright sunlight and the surroundings helped to dissipate some of her fears. The dilapidated vehicle was parked in a tangled area behind the booths and concessions of yet another fair. In the background she saw the twin towers of the damaged cathedral of Rheims.

There was a pump close by, and she went to it and washed her face, the cold water helping to clear her head. When she ventured through the tangle of guy wires and stays supporting a nearby tent, she heard suddenly a voice with a familiar rasp, " Holà, Mouche! "

She edged through to the street on which the fair fronted. It was Mr. Reynardo. The booth that she had seen only by torch flare the night before was standing once more. It looked shabby in the morning light. But there was no disputing that Mr. Reynardo was a fine figure of an impudent red fox.

He whistled at her, opened his jaws, and asked, " Washed your face, baby? "

" Of course," Mouche replied, and then asked pointedly, " Did you? "

" No, but don't tell anyone. I think I got away with it." He whipped below and was replaced by Carrot Top who held a one-hundred-franc note in his two hands. He said: " Oh, hullo, Mouche. Sleep all right? "

" Oh yes, thank you. I think so." The most delicious relief pervaded her. Here they were again, her little friends of the night before. How natural it seemed to be standing there talking to them.

Carrot Top piped, " Go get yourself some bread and cheese for your breakfast," and handed her the note. " There's an *épicerie* just down the street. I've still got a lot to do to get the show ready. And bring back the change."

As she turned to go, somebody behind her went, " Psssssst! " She looked round and saw Mr. Reynardo in a corner of the booth motioning to her with his head. She went to him and he stretched his muzzle up to her ear and whispered hoarsely, " There needn't *be* any change."

Mouche asked, " What do you mean, Mr. Reynardo? "

The Fox contrived a wicked leer. " Call me Rey. Sh . . . Everybody knows prices are up. Say breakfast cost more and keep the difference. But remember, it was my idea. Fifty-fifty, kid."

Mouche shook her head as earnestly as though she were reproving a child. " But Rey . . . really! That isn't honest."

" Ha, ha! " yipped the Fox. " Maybe not, but it's the only way you'll get any money out of this outfit. Don't say I didn't tip you."

When Mouche returned from her breakfast, with thirty francs

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left over, Carrot Top and Gigi the ingénue were holding the stage. When Gigi went away, Carrot Top, taking the empty stage, explained the plot of their play.

Into this plot, without further preparation, Mouche was drawn by the puppets to explain, guide, mother, scold, keeping their secrets, sharing others with the audience, while playing a variety of roles, a maid, Mr. Reynardo's secretary, Dr. Duclos's sister, a friend of Madame Muscat's.

She had a quick wit for situations, but above all, she had the ability to forget herself and become wholly immersed in the goings-on. Because she believed so completely in the little creatures, she had the unique power of transferring this belief to the audience and, with a look, a laugh, or a single tender passage between herself and one of the puppets, transporting the watchers away from the hard-packed earth on which they stood and into the world of make-believe where the ordinary rules of life and living did not obtain.

Before the little play was over, all concerned had changed sides so often, that Monsieur Nicholas had to appear to untangle them, and at the finish, to great applause, Carrot Top and Gigi, Dr. Duclos and Madame Muscat, and Ali and Mouche were paired off, for the poor Giant made such a muddle of things that Mouche had to take him under her wing, and he proceeded to fall desperately and moon-calf in love with her.

That day the collections made by Golo far surpassed anything Coq and his family had earned heretofore, and the puppeteer took a room in a cheap hotel for himself and a servant's room upstairs for Mouche. Golo was still relegated to sleep in the car and watch over the puppets. He did not mind, for he preferred to be with them.

And that night at the inn, all three ate a good supper with red wine, of which Coq drank heavily. The drink did not make him mellower but, on the contrary, still more scornful and contemptuous of Mouche.

He ate grossly, ignoring her presence, but once, when he felt her large eyes upon him in the uneasy silence that lay over their table like an oasis in the centre of the noisy, smoky bistro, he looked up from his eating, and snarled at her, " What the devil got into you this afternoon when Carrot Top asked you what to do to win Gigi and make her fly away with him in his helicopter? You stood there, frozen and staring like an animal. Why didn't you tell him? "

It was not the reproof, but the sudden shifting of the base of this new and marvellous world into which she had been ushered that disturbed Mouche. It was as though there had been an unwarranted intrusion by an outsider.

" Why," she exclaimed carefully, " Carrot Top doesn't want to be told what to do. He made me promise before he let me come along that I was never to interfere with him. And besides," she concluded after a moment of reflection, " he doesn't really love Gigi at all, because—"

She broke off in alarm, for Capitaine Coq was staring at her, his face now flushed dark with rage.

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" What makes *you* think you know who Carrot Top loves or doesn't love, you milk-faced little fool? "

For a moment Mouche thought the red-headed man was about to hurl his plate of food in her face.

Mouche said, " I—I'm sorry. I really don't know . . . I suppose I was just guessing. I won't do it again."

The fury did not abate on Coq's face, but he did not speak to her again and instead took it out on Golo, shouting at him, " What are you lingering for, you black monkey? Haven't you stuffed yourself enough? Get back to the car before everything is pilfered! "

They continued to eat and drink in heavy silence, until Mouche gathered the courage to speak to him again. In her simple, gentle way she asked, " Monsieur le Capitaine, why are you always so angry? "

He laid down his knife and fork and stared long at her out of his cold, hard eyes. " Because you are a fool," he replied finally, " and I have no time for fools, particularly women."

Mouche was not hurt, for she was used to living amongst men who were outspoken. And besides, she did not think she was clever or, since the disasters that had happened to her, even talented any longer.

Impulsively she reached over and placed her hand upon his in a sweet, conciliatory gesture, saying, " Dear Capitaine Coq—why cannot you be as kind and patient with me as Carrot Top, Dr. Duclos, and Mr. Reynardo? I am sure they thought I was very stupid at times today, but they never showed it."

The touch of her gentle fingers seemed to sting Capitaine Coq, and he snatched his hand away. " Because your staring eyes and whining innocence make me sick."

The attack was so savage that the tears came to Mouche's eyes, and she nodded her head silently.

" As for them," Capitaine Coq continued, draining his glass, " it is no concern of mine what they do. Get along with them if you know what is good for you, during working-hours. And keep out of my way at other times. Understood? "

Mouche nodded again. " I'll try."

Yet, in spite of the harshness of Capitaine Coq—which had the effect only of moving her to a kind of pity for him, for he seemed to be so wretched in his furies—the week of the street fair in Rheims was one of the happiest times Mouche had ever known.

The warmth of her relationship with the seven puppets seemed to grow by leaps and bounds, and soon she was familiar with their characteristics, their strengths and weaknesses, the striving and ambitious little Carrot Top with the soaring imagination that always wished to brush aside earthbound obstacles, and yet was tied down by the responsibility for all the others and the running of the show; the pompous, long-winded, fatuous Dr. Duclos, the prototype of every self-satisfied stuffed shirt, who was still in his bumbling way kind; and the vain, foolish, self-centred ingénue Gigi who, alone of all the little dolls, was not.

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Most dependent upon her was Alifanfaron, the Giant, who frightened no one and was so kind-hearted and slow-witted that everyone took advantage of him. He looked pathetically to Mouche for help and protection, and some of the most charming passages took place between the ugly, fearful-looking monster and the young girl who mothered him.

She got on best with Madame Muscat, for Madame was a woman who had seen life and buried husbands, understood men and felt that women should stick together for mutual protection. She was always Mouche's ally, ready with advice, or an aphorism, or a bit of useful gossip as to what was going on backstage, or below the counter, that mysterious domain where the puppets dwelt.

But if Mouche had had to select a favourite of them all, it would have been Mr. Reynardo. He touched her most deeply because he was sly, wicked, not quite honest, knew it, and wished and tried, but not too fervently, to be better.

He amused her, too. He baited and teased her and sometimes worked up little intrigues against her with the others, but when it came right down to it, he also seemed to love her the most and feel the deepest need for her affection. Much of his yapping was bravado, and the moments when Mouche felt almost unbearably touched and happy were when, from time to time, cracks appeared in his armour of cynicism, and through them she caught glimpses of the small child within, wanting to be forgiven and loved.

Though he was her friend and counsellor, Mouche remained a little in awe of Monsieur Nicholas, the mender of toys, for he was a dispenser of impartial justice as well as kindness. His glance through his square spectacles always seemed to penetrate her and reach to her innermost secret thoughts.

Childlike, too, but in the primitive fashion backed by the dark lore of his race, was Golo. He was indeed the slave who served the puppets and now that Mouche had become as one of them, hers too. He was versed in the mechanics of the show, yet they meant nothing to him.

One moment he could be behind the booth, assisting Capitaine Coq in a change of costume for one of the puppets, handing him props, or hanging the dolls in proper order, head down so that Coq could thrust his hands into them quickly for those lightning appearances and disappearances of the characters; and the next moment, out front with Mouche, he looked upon them as living, breathing creatures.

The belief in the separate existence of these little people was even more basic with Mouche, for it was a necessity to her, and a refuge from the storms of life with which she had been unable to cope.

If, fundamentally, she must have been aware that it was Coq who animated them, she managed to obliterate the thought. For how could one reconcile the man and his creations? And further, she rarely saw Capitaine Coq enter or leave the booth, for he was moody and mysterious in his comings and goings. Sometimes he

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would sit inside for as long as an hour in the early morning, or even late at night, without giving a sign of his presence there, until suddenly one or more of his puppets would appear onstage.

All orders were given, all business directed through Carrot Top, all rehearsals conducted, new songs learnt, plots and bits of business discussed with the puppets, until conversing with them became second nature to Mouche, and it became almost impossible for her to associate this odd family of such diverse characters with the pale, bitter man who was their creator.

When the week of the fair was at an end in Rheims, they moved on to Sedan for three days and thence to Montmédy and Metz, for that year it was Capitaine Coq's intention to tour north-eastern France and Alsace, until the cold weather drove them south.

One night, without warning, Capitaine Coq emerged from the taproom of the sordid little inn on the outskirts of the city where they were quartered, half drunk and amorous.

It was late. There were no women about, the regulars having long since paired off or disappeared. He bethought himself then of a piece of property he considered as belonging to him, the girl asleep upstairs in the narrow bedroom under the eaves.

It was time as well, he thought, that the little ninny learnt something and became a woman. And besides, since they were travelling together, it would be cheaper if henceforth they occupied one room—and perhaps, if she was not a stick, convenient too.

But there was yet another darker purpose that sent him prowling up the stairs that led to the attic chamber. It was the fact that her gentleness, innocence, and purity of heart were a perpetual affront to him, the kind of man he was, and the life that he led. It had been eating into him ever since he had first laid eyes on her. Now he could no longer bear it unless he pulled her down to his level and made her as he was.

He tiptoed to her door, bent, and listened for a moment; then, turning the handle swiftly, he whipped inside with the furtive speed of one of his own puppets, and closed the door behind him.

When Mouche awoke the next morning, the sunshine was pouring in through the dormer window as if to deny the nightmare that had happened to her. She had thought she would not sleep that night, or ever sleep again. Yet, somehow, oblivion had come, and now the day.

She got out of bed and went to the window which looked onto the rear courtyard of the inn where a dog lolloped, a pig lay in the mud, chickens picked at the ground, and ducks and a goose waddled through puddles of dirty water.

They reminded her of her childhood and the farmyards of her village in Brittany, and she wondered how she could stand there so calmly contemplating them and the memories they aroused, she who would never be as a child again.

Mouche had neither protested against nor resisted Capitaine

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Coq's act of darkness. Out of the darkness he had come, in darkness taken her, and to darkness returned, leaving her bruised, defiled, and ashamed.

Startled out of her sleep by his presence, she had recognized him when a shaft of moonlight had fallen across his pale face with the crinkled nose, draining the red from his hair, turning it to purple.

For an instant, her heart had leapt, for she thought that perhaps he loved her, and she would not have denied him. But there was no love in his eyes or in his heart; no whisper came from his lips, and too late she knew what was afoot.

It would have been of no use to cry out. Besides, where could she have escaped, naked, alone, friendless, and penniless in a strange inn? He was there before she could make a move, intruding himself into her room, her consciousness, her bed, and then her person.

The brutality of his passion brought her close to a climax of her own, one of seemingly unbearable grief, anguish, and pain, and once she murmured his name, " Michel," piteously. She thought that surely she would die.

Then he was gone at last, leaving her shamed to death because he had abused her so callously without loving her, weeping miserably with humiliation and hurt because of his cynical contempt for her, the disgusting arrogance and carelessness of his possession of her person. He had not given her a single kindly glance, or caress, or kiss; no word, no gentleness. To illuminate the despair that engulfed her, he had left not a solitary ray of hope that within his strong, imprisoning, goatish body there beat a human heart.

And she was the more shamed because of the instinctive knowledge that, despite the horror and brutality, she had yielded, and the act and the moment might make her for ever his.

These were the black memories, her thoughts, and fears that morning as she prepared to face what the day would bring.

And yet the miracle occurred again; for that day was like any other, except, if anything, the troupe was still kinder and more friendly to her

All that summer and into the autumn they trouped through eastern France and Alsace, slowly working southward, moving from town to town, sometimes part of a street fair or carnival, at other times setting up the booth in the market-place or square of small villages en route without so much as a by-your-leave from the police or local authorities.

When these officials came demanding permits, they were disconcerted to find themselves having to deal with Carrot Top, Mr. Reynardo, Madame Muscat, or Dr. Duclos, with Mouche endeavouring to help with the explanations, and usually their charm won the day and they were allowed to remain.

Since Mouche's advent, the lean days were over, and there was always a bed in an inn, cheap hotel, or farmhouse with a room to spare, and sometimes even the luxury of a bath at night after a day

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spent in the hot sun. Only, now Capitaine Coq no longer bothered to engage two rooms, but simply shared one with Mouche. Thus Mouche, without realizing it, was possessed by him both by day and by night.

The days continued to be an enduring enchantment, the nights an everlasting torment, whether he used her for his pleasure, or turned his back upon her without a word and fell into heavy sleep, leaving her lying there, trembling.

Capitaine Coq was drinking to excess because he had impaled himself upon the horns of a strange dilemma, and he did not know what to do, except consume wine until all sensation and memory were gone.

On the one hand, he was taking all that he wanted or needed from Mouche. She was a growing asset to the show and he was beginning to make money. Further, she was a captive bedmate for whom he need feel no responsibility. But on the other hand, he had made the discovery that while he had indeed been able to ravage her physically, he had never succeeded in destroying her innocence.

The more cruelly he treated her, the kindlier and more friendly to her were the puppets the next morning. He seemed to have lost all control over them. As for Mouche, she lived in a turmoil of alternating despair and entrancing joy.

One night, in Besançon, in a horrible, culminating attempt to break her, Coq appeared in their room with a slut he had picked up in the tavern. They were both drunk.

He switched on the light and stood looking down at her while she roused herself and sat up.

"Get up and get out," he commanded.

She did not understand, and sat there, staring.

"Get out. I'm sick of you."

She still could not understand what he meant. "But, Michel, where am I to go?"

"To the devil, for all I care. Hurry up and get out. We want that bed."

That night Mouche reached new depths of shame and humiliation as she dressed beneath the mocking eyes of the drab and went out of the room, leaving them there.

For a time she wandered about the streets in a daze, not knowing where she was going. Then she came upon the Citroën. Golo was sitting at the wheel, smoking a cigarette, his white patch standing out in the light of the street lamp. He appeared to be waiting for her.

He got out and took her by the arm. "You come here and rest, Miss Mouche," he said.

He had seen Capitaine Coq go in with the woman and Mouche emerge from the inn, and had followed her. He opened the rear door and she climbed in, unseeing, and slumped onto the seat. Golo drove to the nearby fairgrounds and parked. The chimes of

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the musical clock of Besançon announced the hour of three. Mouche began to weep.

Golo reached back and took her small thin hand in his calloused mahogany paw with the fingers hard and scaly from the steel strings of the guitar. But his grip was infinitely tender and his voice equally so as he said, "Do not cry, my little one." Only it sounded even more beautiful and touching in the soft Senegal French, "Ne pleurez pas, ma petite. Ça vous fait mal aux jolis yeux."

Mouche continued to weep as though she would never be able to cease. Golo got out of the car, was absent for a moment, and then returned. "Mouche," he called gently. "Miss Mouche. You look here. Please, Miss Mouche, you look."

The insistence of the soft pleading reached through to Mouche. She took her hands from her face and stared, unbelieving, for a moment. Carrot Top and Mr. Reynardo were looking at her over the top of the front seat.

"Carrot Top! Rey! Oh, my darlings . . ." Mouche cried, her heart near to bursting.

The two stared at her woodenly. Between them shone the face of Golo like the mask of an ancient, oddly compassionate African god carved out of ebony.

He said sadly, "They not talk for me, Miss Mouche. But they love you. That's why I brought them here, so you remember that. They always love you."

Mouche reached over and took the two puppets from his hands and cradled the empty husks in her arms; and they brought her comfort until her sorely tried spirit rebelled in an outcry that came from her depths: "But why does he hate me so, Golo? Why is he so cruel? Why is he so evil?"

The Senegalese reflected before he replied, "He bewitched. His spirit go out from him. Another come in. Golo see magic like this many years ago in Touba in Senegal when he boy."

Mouche could understand this, for she herself came from a country where the supernatural was accepted. She said, "Then you don't hate him, Golo?"

Golo's cigarette glowed momentarily and he sighed. The noises of the city and the fair were stilled except for the occasional shattering protest of the mangy and hungry lion caged at the far end. He said, "It good sometimes to hate. But I think it better not to. Sometimes, when you hate, you forget it if you sing."

His guitar was by his side and, so softly that it was barely audible, he plucked out the melody of a Breton lullaby and hummed it softly. He remembered the words after a moment or two:

My young one, my sweeting,
Rock in your cradle,
The sea rocks your father,
The sea rocks his cradle,
God grant you sweet sleep,
God grant him return.

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When he played it again, Mouche began to sing it with him, rocking the two dolls in her arms, for that night she was more than half mad because of what had been done to her.

Yet Golo had been right; the music worked its magic and the hatred seemed to fade. In its place, there returned an echo of the odd compassion she had so often felt for that evil man and which she had never understood. Golo's eyes were closed and he was singing, dreaming and swaying.

They sang it together in comfort, and not long after in happiness. Golo left off playing. When the vibrations of the strings died away, Mouche went to sleep, the heads of Carrot Top and Mr. Reynardo still cradled to her breasts. The cigarette glowed yet a while longer and then was extinguished. Darkness and quiet fell over the Citroën and its strangely assorted inhabitants.

Inextinguishable was the hatred that Capitaine Coq felt for the drab he had taken to his bed, and soon he pushed her from the room, and lay there cursing helplessly, what or why he did not know, unless it were the thought of Mouche, her simplicity, her gentleness, her inviolability, and the impossibility of reducing her to the state of the woman he had just flung from his bed.

Yet the next day, life returned once more to Carrot Top and Mr. Reynardo and all the others. Mouche again appeared before the booth to look after, abet, and interpret them to the children, large and small, infant and adult, who came to look and listen.

The tour was continued, but with a change. Thereafter, Capitaine Coq took a second room for Mouche when they stayed overnight, and avoided contact with her as much as possible.

And there was yet another difference, but this was more gradual in developing when they worked their way down through Annecy and Grenoble, heading for the south of France as the weather began to turn crisp and chill. The nature of the performance was changing.

More and more the stereotyped plot was abandoned, and the characters and the story wandered off into flights of imagination stemming from the schemes of Mr. Reynardo, the streak of poetry and imagination in Carrot Top, and Mouche's unique ability to enter into their make-believe.

They were unique, and the parts of France through which they made their way were not long in discovering it. The reputation of the talking and singing puppets and the live girl who stood out front and conversed with them was beginning to precede them, and when they reached Nice on the Côte d'Azur, it had an effect that was to be far-reaching upon all of them.

★ ★ ★

A final excerpt from
" Love of Seven Dolls " by Paul Gallico
will appear in next month's Argosy

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NIGHTFALL

He shall cover thee with his feathers . . .
Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night

Psalm XCI

The curve of the moon was held
in the curve of the branches,
and was held there gently.
The curve of the hill accepted
the curve of the sky.
None of the softness
claimed another softness,
but all was blended
into the mellow curves,
into the blue and silent
gentleness of nightfall.

JOSEPH JOEL KEITH, *Curves of Quiet*

Listen, it is Night—

It is spring, moonless night in the small town, starless and bible-black, the cobble-streets silent and the hunched, courters'-and-rabbits' wood limping invisible down to the sloeblack, slow, black, crowblack, fishingboat-bobbing sea. The houses are blind as moles (though moles see fine tonight in the snouting, velvet dingles) or blind as Captain Cat there in the muffled middle by the pump and the town clock, the shops in mourning, the Welfare Hall in widows' weeds. And all the people of the lulled and dumfound town are sleeping now.

Hush, the babies are sleeping, the farmers, the fishers, the tradesmen and pensioners, cobbler, schoolteacher, postman and publican, the undertaker and the fancy woman, drunkard, dressmaker, preacher, policeman, the webfoot cocklewomen and the tidy wives. Young girls lie bedded soft or glide in their dreams, with rings and trousseaux, bridesmaided by glow-worms down the aisles of the organplaying wood. The boys are dreaming wicked or of the bucking ranches of the night and the jolly-rodgered sea. And the anthracite statues of the horses sleep in the fields, and the cows in the byres, and the dogs in the wetnosed yards; and the cats nap in the slant corners or lope sly, streaking and needling, on the one cloud of the roofs.

You can hear the dew falling, and the hushed town breathing.

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Only *your* eyes are unclosed to see the black and folded town fast, and slow, asleep.

And you alone can hear the invisible starfall, the darkest-before-dawn minutely dewgrazed stir of the black, dab-filled sea where the *Arethusa*, the *Curlew* and the *Skylark*, *Zanzibar*, *Rhiannon*, the *Rover*, the *Cormorant*, and the *Star of Wales* tilt and ride.

Listen. It is night moving in the streets, the processional salt slow musical wind in Coronation Street and Cockle Row, it is the grass growing on Llaregyb Hill, dewfall, starfall, the sleep of birds in Milk Wood.

Listen. It is night in the chill, squat chapel, hymning in bonnet and brooch and bombazine black, butterfly choker and bootlace bow, coughing like nannygoats, sucking mintoes, forty-winking hallelujah; night in the four-ale, quiet as a domino; in Ocky Milkman's lofts like a mouse with gloves; in Dai Bread's bakery flying like black flour. It is tonight in Donkey Street . . .

DYLAN THOMAS, *Under Milk Wood*

For Lovers

Night is a room
darkened for lovers . . .

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

Hunter's Moon

So we were up in the night again, silent among the night courses of the world. Gos was too sleepy, at half past one, to bate away when I went in. I took him out, after he had stepped obediently to the fist, into the bright moonlight where strato-cumulus went fast across a full, pale moon in a north-westerly wind. King Charles' wain was hiding behind a bank of clouds, but Cassiopeia faithfully presided over the north star, and one could faintly see a few pinpricks of the little bear as he hung by his tail.

The ghosts of the lonely road to Silston, Adams and Tyrell, were abashed by the moonlight and did not trouble us. Brownie, my red setter, a blue-dark shade, sent Gos into a bate as she scampered through the quiet world in pursuit of rabbits. Evans, in the big house gone to seed, slept in a Welsh peace, dreaming perhaps of Owen Glendower. Chub Wheeler by the Black Pit slumbered deeply, guarded by slumbering dogs. The moon lay calm on the ruffled water.

T. H. WHITE, *The Goshawk*

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The Serenaders

. . . let me colour it with moonlight:
place cats upon the roof, those stealthy serenaders,
let them snarl, let a soft wind
rattle on the telephone wires for a sombre guitar,
let them whine and spit to that sad continual music,
tortured in their amours . . .

SACHEVERELL SITWELL, *Convent Thoughts in Cadiz*

Country Vigil

As watching is best done invisibly, she usually carried a dark lantern in her hand, and every now and then turned on the light to examine nooks and corners with the coolness of a metropolitan policeman . . .

This night the buildings were inspected as usual, and she went round to the farm paddock. Here the only sounds disturbing the stillness were steady munchings of many mouths, and stentorian breathings from all but invisible noses, ending in snores and puffs like the blowing of bellows slowly. Then the munching would recommence, when the lively imagination might assist the eye to discern a group of pink-white nostrils, shaped as caverns, and very clammy and humid on their surfaces, not exactly pleasant to the touch until one got used to them; the mouths beneath having a great partiality for closing upon any loose end of Bathsheba's apparel which came within reach of their tongues.

Above each of these a still keener vision suggested a brown forehead and two staring though not unfriendly eyes, and above all a pair of whitish crescent-shaped horns like two particularly new moons, an occasional stolid "moo!" proclaiming beyond the shade of a doubt that these phenomena were the features and persons of Daisy, Whitefoot, Bonny-lass, Jolly-O, Spot, Twinkle-eye, etc., etc.—the respectable dairy of Devon cows belonging to Bathsheba aforesaid.

THOMAS HARDY, *Far From the Madding Crowd*

Benison

Upon my ryght syde y may leye, blessid Lady to the y prey
Ffor the teres that ye lete upon your swete Sonnys feete
Sende me grace for to slepe, and good dremys for to mete
Slepyng wakyng till morrowe day bee . . .

Author Unknown, The Harleian MSS.

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SUCCESS STORY

"All artists are mad," she said

by KEM BENNETT

JOHN RANKIN glared at his work, and his work glared back at him. The colour hit him between the eyes and he was forced to admit that the painting did not lack impact. Nevertheless, he thought it lacked many things. Before he had time to yield to the temptings of a clay-footed, over-paunched devil of self-satisfaction, he snatched the picture off the easel and sent it spinning through the open window beside him.

It fell forty feet into the garbage-littered, open cellars of the ruin which flanked Number Forty-two, rue du Pot-de-Fer, Paris XIV^{e}. It took perhaps a second to fall, and for that second but no longer, John allowed himself to regret having thrown it away.

Mélanie Pariselle, his model, stepped down from the dais. Automatically, she looked round for her wrapper, then remembered she had clothes on.

She yawned. "Finished?"

John scowled at the open window. "Don't ask silly questions, ma poule!"

"That makes the third time this month."

"I believe it does, yes."

"If you ask me," Mélanie said, "it's madness."

John shrugged. "It may be." He looked at his watch. "Three hours. At two hundred an hour that makes six hundred. Have you change for a billet de mille, Mélanie?"

The girl glanced complacently in the spotty mirror over the paint-spattered sink, admiring the sculptural face which would continue to earn her money for as long as she had need of it. Then she looked at John, smiling, her eyes full of the slightly patronizing affection with which the Parisian regards a friendly and familiar foreigner.

"Why do you do it, chéri?" she said softly. "Is it because all artists are mad? You are an artist, therefore you have to be mad? Is it because a gesture is worth more than a square meal?"

John looked her in the eyes. "Naturally."

After a pause, the girl said, "I don't believe you!"

John smiled.

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"Please tell me," Mélanie said plaintively. "Three beautiful paintings thrown on the dump! It worries me. I don't understand. C'est de la bêtise, mon cher!"

"No." John shook his head. "It has to be done, Mélanie. I've learnt that if I keep a painting for ten seconds after having decided it has failed, I cannot resist the temptation to muck it about. I go back to it again and again, trying to paint success over the ugly face of failure. It is always better to start again."

"At this rate you'll be starting again when they tap the nails in your coffin!" she said. "How old are you? Thirty-five? It is too late in life, thirty-five, to pretend to be a student."

"I am a student," John said.

"You are an artist, chéri."

"All artists are students."

The girl waved a hand disgustedly in the air. "Ah, ça! Ça, alors! All artists think themselves students, but they could be wrong."

"Have you change for a billet de mille?" John asked again.

Mélanie looked at the bank-note in his hand. "It is the last, that one? No brothers and sisters?"

John grinned. "I have a couple of hundred hidden in the mattress."

"So have I," Mélanie said gravely. "We are plutocrats, you and I. As one plutocrat to another, I beseech you to forget the six hundred. Today it's on the house. A bientôt, mon vieux! Better luck next time, hein?"

Half an hour later, John pushed his way through the swing doors of Le Chien Bavard. The menu at 450 francs consisted of soupe à l'oignon, escalope de veau à la crème, cheese, and fruit. Hunger had him fidgeting in his chair, and when his food arrived, he went through it like a combine harvester devouring wheat. He drank a bottle of wine with it. The bill wrote off Mélanie's generosity.

He left the restaurant and walked down the rue du Pot-de-Fer towards the bar at the corner. As he passed the ruin which lay beside his apartment-house, he fiercely resisted the temptation to go and scrabble among the garbage for his picture.

Instead, he thought with painful intensity of ways and means of making enough money to survive. There was Didier's Advertising Agency. Once, long ago, they had offered him a job. Or there was the dealer near the Etoile who paid two thousand francs for a copy of the Mona Lisa, and would take them by the dozen if he got the chance. The thought of doing a dozen copies of the Mona Lisa made John wince. It would be better to wash

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dishes, or swing a pickaxe, or even guide tourists round the sights of Paris.

The Bar du Pot de Fer, which was not a bar but a café, with a zinc-topped counter, plastic-topped tables, and a monstrous juke-box, was almost empty. A single customer leaned against the counter, and behind it, Marcel Aubry, the proprietor, was reading the cycling news on the back page of *Le Peuple*.

For a moment John hesitated in the doorway, thinking of going home to bed. However, he had three hundred and fifty francs in his pocket. It was too small a sum to be anything but an embarrassment. He wanted to be rid of it, so that the goad of utter penury would drive him to Didier's—or to the Louvre to copy the Mona Lisa.

He walked up to the bar. Fat Marcel thrust his hand over the counter; John shook it, and they greeted one another.

John turned to the other customer. "Bonsoir, cher maître."

Charlot le Rossignol cackled and edged closer along the counter. "Bonsoir, Monsieur. Ça va bien?"

"Not too bad," John said. "Not good, but not too bad."

"You goin' to have a drink with Charlot?"

Marcel Aubry laid down his paper. John blinked, staring at the old man beside him. Charlot le Rossignol. Unlike his namesake, the nightingale, Charlot had never sung a note in his life. He was a maker of skeleton keys—to those in Paris who use such things, *rossignols*. He was far older than the Eiffel Tower. He wept a great deal—unemotionally, with the slow, gummy, pendulous tears of senility. He had not had a tooth in his head for thirty years, and his clothes hung upon him like seaweed on a derelict pier. Furthermore, it was said that his keys would no longer open even the door of a public convenience. Charlot had lost his touch, and his trade was less than brisk.

To be asked to have a drink by Charlot le Rossignol was as bizarre an experience as being helped through the ground-floor window of a jeweller's shop by an agent de police. It was unbelievable. John chose not to believe it. "Ah non, Charlot!" he protested. "Have one with me."

"Non!" Two tears ran down the old man's drooping cheeks, shaken loose before their time by the vehemence of his refusal. "Tonight it is old Charlot who pays!"

Fat Marcel interrupted, speaking with a gravel-voiced Parisian accent. "He's loaded. He must have made a key for the Bank of France. He's been drinking since five."

John shook his head with incredulous amazement, then remembered his manners. "I am honoured, Charlot." He smiled at the old man. "I should like a small marc, if you please."

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Charlot waved a hand like the wing of a bat. "Of course," he said. "The same for me. And you, mon cher patron—will you serve yourself?"

Marcel Aubry set them up. They drank. Marcel set them up again and yet again.

Eventually, at eleven, Charlot tottered, yawned, rubbed his rheumy eyes. He pulled a roll of notes from some pocket in the secret depths of his ragged clothing. John made a quick estimate of their number and decided that there must be at least thirty in the roll.

Charlot le Rossignol paid his bill, and left the tip, with lordly insouciance. He said good night and shambled to the door. John and Marcel Aubry watched him go.

"Where did he get it?" John asked weakly. "Where could he have got it?"

Aubry scratched a pimple on the back of his thick neck. "Must be a cut off some job for which he made the keys," he said. "Before you came in, the old idiot told me a story of a mad artist who throws pictures out of a window, but that was a blind, voyons! Where is the artist mad enough to throw valuable paintings out of the window?"

John crashed through the doors. In the deserted street outside, he saw Charlot fifty yards away. "Charlot! Charlot le Rossignol!"

The old man stopped. John ran up to him. "The pictures, Charlot!" he gasped. "Where did you sell them? Which dealer?"

Charlot stared at him blearily. A look of senile cunning entered his faded eyes. He put his finger to his nose. "That would be telling, mon gars. That would be telling."

John leaned against the wall of an ironmonger's shop. Laughter was making his ribs ache. He controlled himself.

"All right," he said. "All right, Charlot, I won't do you down. You shall be my agent. Ten per cent, Charlot. Ten francs in a hundred. How will that do?"

Charlot le Rossignol thought for a long time, working things out. Then he looked up. "You are the artist? You painted the pictures?"

"Yes, Charlot."

The old man blinked. "Fifteen per cent."

"Go and soak yourself, you old goat! Ten."

"I've been getting a hundred."

"I don't *have* to throw pictures out of the window," John pointed out.

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It was the truth. Charlot recognized it, and faced the truth bravely.

"All right," he said. "Ten."

John patted him on the back.

"It's a deal. Now come back to Aubry's and we'll have a drink. You're my agent. You can lend me a few thousand to be going on with. That's the kind of thing agents are for, Charlot. Believe me."

"Ah, it starts," Charlot said ruefully. "The life of a capitalist. The things those people have to worry about, nom d'un nom!"

★ ★ ★

DOWN BEAT

I have no strong views on the subject of corporal punishment at schools. For strong, healthy boys it is a corrective that has the great advantage of being short as well as sharp . . . For the caner, there were unexpected hazards. One had to know what to do when, for instance, one was interrupted in the middle of the operation by the appearance of several slices of cooked ham slowly emerging from the victim's left trouser-leg. This happened to me once. The culprit had inserted them in his trousers as a novel form of protection, and my first blows had dislodged them. No doubt there's a text-book solution to this problem, but on the spur of the moment all I could think of saying was "Put away that ham."

A friend of mine in another House had a worse experience than this. He had occasion to chastise a junior member of the Royal Family. On the upward swing of his first stroke, he burst the only electric-light bulb in the room. From then on he scattered his blows by guesswork all over the royal anatomy.

For me a much worse punishment than caning was the confiscation of my trumpet, which happened whenever my work was unsatisfactory or I made too much noise with it in the House. For a while, these constant interruptions threatened to cripple my progress, until I hit on the simple answer.

Whenever Mr. Butterwick pronounced the grim sentence, "Bring me that trumpet!" I would hand over my trumpet with every appearance of regret. But it was only a spare—a cheap model kept specially for use as a hostage. This was locked away in a cupboard, and I would go elsewhere to practise on my carefully guarded proper instrument.

HUMPHREY LYTTELTON, *I Play as I Please: the Memoirs of an Old Etonian Trumpeter*

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by CHRISTOPHER LANDON

author of "The Skull and The Sword"

THE man lying beside Heskin took a long time to die.

Both were held fast, their feet higher than their bodies, heads close together. Heskin could not feel the ankle that disappeared into the crack where the seats of the compartment had telescoped together—could only hope that his foot was still there.

His companion had no such benefit of doubt; if he did recover consciousness he would find that he stopped short of both feet. It looked as if an amateur butcher had been at work with a blunt axe.

They were lying on what had been the corridor side of the train, on a bed of debris: coats, cases, newspapers, and broken glass. The pale, dusty light that filtered through from behind must come from a jagged hole through which part of a wheel and the springs of a coach bogie pressed down, ponderous and menacing. There was another carriage on top; it must have been a hell of a smash.

As he fought his way up from that sea of oblivion, Heskin knew he could not have been out for long; there was still a fog of dust in the air, and almost complete silence. Then, like the tuning of an orchestra, separate dreadful sounds broke in, one by one. Eerie, disembodied, they came from all directions: groans, the hiss of steam, a woman whimpering.

Heskin fumbled in his pocket for matches, and when he had struck one, held it as high as he could above his head. It did not help much—only enough to give a clearer view of the face beside him, and the first sight of his own suitcase . . .

He leaned towards the still figure, staring till the match burnt

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★ ARGOSY'S ★

ENTHRALLING NEW NOVEL

★

Opening Chapters of this adventure mystery

his fingers; now the resemblance was not so striking, for the face was pinched in about the nose and had that flaccid, waxy look of finality. He did not need to spend any time on the second thing; the suitcase, which had been caught in the jaws of the closing seats and stuck out high above them, burst open. A trail of shirts and underclothes festooned down, but in the gaps between he could see the tight-packed bundles of money. Some had fallen out and burst apart; like a carpet of leaves, they were around and beneath him—a litter of pound notes. They rustled as he fought to free himself, to get up and gather the damning evidence that lay so close, but there was no movement, not even pain, from his imprisoned foot. He was caught like a rat in a trap.

The struggle ended quickly and he lay back exhausted, sobbing as he stared up into the gloom. He heard the other sounds that were now breaking through that dreadful chorus, the hammering, the normal voices shouting—in action and not in pain.

Heskin did not answer; he lay still, trying to think what to do.

A spark of humanity broke through the dark cloud of impending disaster and he stretched out to reach for one of his shirts, tearing it into strips. He strained forward but could not reach the man's ankles; so, throwing the rest of the shirt over that slobber of blood and the splintered bones that stuck out like white fingers, he went for the next pressure point—behind the knee. With hard lumps of money from his pocket, padded with pound notes and bound with the shirt, he managed to improvise a tourniquet.

Exhausted by the effort, Heskin lay back, huddling close to the

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warmth next to him, thankful for any form of human contact. As the face beside him showed so close and so white in the half-light, his mind grappled with impossible odds, the million-to-one chance that had brought them together like this.

The other stirred and opened his eyes. Recognition came back with a faint, tired smile. "Hullo, my familiar," he whispered. "What has happened to us?"

"There's been a bad crash," Heskin said gently.

"My feet are paining me—acutely. I want—" He was whispering carefully, in that precise, too perfect English. He tried to sit up.

Heskin held him back, for he could not let him see. "You rest," he said. "I've fixed you up as best I can." Then he felt in his pocket. "Would you like a cigarette?"

His companion shook his head. For the first time Heskin strained to listen to the sounds that were building up around them. Very near, there was a deep, tearing sound, and their prison shook as a stream of dust from the jagged hole above spattered their legs. He looked up in time to see the flange of the great wheel poised there slip a few inches farther down in their direction.

Then he panicked; screaming, shouting anything and everything, as he struggled to free that foot, until a wave of faintness stilled him.

An ice-cold hand was laid on his. "Don't exhaust yourself, my friend," said his companion. "For you it is better to wait patiently—for me it does not matter—I am going to die."

There was silence between them while those withdrawn eyes searched Heskin's face. Then the whispering voice went on: "That being so, the only thing I have left is curiosity. I would like to talk—if you don't mind. Who are you—my double—where are you going, and what to do?"

Another groan of tortured metal from above; more dust showered on them. This time Heskin did not dare look up; perhaps death, hanging so close, made him tell the truth as he answered, "My name doesn't matter. I'm a bank clerk, and I'm on the run."

The faint smile came again. "We are all on the run, my friend, always—from the moment we can think until we die." His eyes followed Heskin's as they moved up to the grinning wound in his suitcase, then down to the litter of money that lay beside him. "So—the police?"

Heskin nodded.

There was a sigh, and then the voice went on, fainter and softer: "I, too, was running—for once *towards* something; and now I shall—never—" The words faded as the eyelids fell flat.

Propped on one elbow, shouting at regular intervals, Heskin watched the breath quicken and almost vanish, watched each line and angle of that face, the closest likeness to his own. The fear that was there when he first saw it was gone; now there was wonder, fraught with a growing, desperate calculation. If only . . .

His next shout brought back reality; from behind and above came an answering call, and when he shouted again, a faint voice spoke directly to him.

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"We've fixed you," it said. "Save your strength till we call again."

Now he was committed; as he lay back waiting, he thought how easy it had all been, how foolproof—until this accident.

—He had taken his time and picked a Saturday, market-day; the particular Saturday that was the last away match of the season for the local football Club. All morning, money had been pouring in to the small sub-branch of the Bank from the traders' stalls in the market-square; all morning, he had watched impatience growing in his fellow clerk, the glances at the clock, the banging of ledgers, mirrored more discreetly in the behaviour of the manager. Both were ardent Club supporters and had been itching to get away.

He had smiled to himself, and let the speed of his own work slow down; once or twice his eyes had drifted to his suitcase standing in the corner. He had wondered if a glance at the contents would have wiped that smug look off old Tompkinson's face. A few unmarked clothes wrapped round a lot of old telephone directories was curious luggage to be taking for a week-end with an aunt in Worthing. He had had to do that—to disguise the lack of weight, in case anyone had chanced to pick it up . . .

The work had gone on; at eleven there had been the change-over at the counter when he had remarked on the rush, adding that he at least was not catching a train till three. Triumphant, he had watched that seed of information germinate, the jerk of his companion's head towards the manager the next time he had appeared from his office, their whispered consultation. The rest had followed naturally—the cough at his elbow that announced the presence of old Tompkinson, lanky, stooping, with those ridiculous black tram-lines of hair plastered back on his bald dome. How Heskin hated him.

"Heskin, I wonder if you would mind finishing the closing today—Morris and I want to get off sharp." He was treated to the nearest thing that ever approached a smile.

"Of course, Mr. Tompkinson. And I was going to ask you—can I come in a little late on Monday? It gives me so much longer at Worthing if I don't have to travel up on Sunday night."

"Yes, that will be all right—if you're not too late."

He turned back towards his office and Heskin to the next customer; as he took the cheque he marvelled once again at the incredible slackness. Tompkinson was asking for it; he made it too easy. Why, if those keys had not been left lying about one day, the idea would never have occurred to him. As he counted out the notes, he congratulated himself on having thought up that bit about Monday morning. It had been a nice touch on the spur of the moment. He expected it to give him a few extra hours before they discovered.

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After the doors of the Bank had closed, the speed with which the other two packed up was ludicrous. He had watched from his desk, fingering the key-ring deep in his trouser-pocket: that special key-ring that held his passkey and those of the others that had been left unguarded long enough for him to take impressions. In the evenings, he had all the time in the world to cut duplicates.

After the bumping of ledgers and the banging of drawers, the manager had stood for a moment with his hand on the latch of the outer door.

"I've set the time-lock on the strong-room door—so don't shut it when you put the rest of the books away, or you'll be in till Monday. Don't forget to set the alarm and leave the lights on."

For the second time there was that apology of a smile. "Have a good time," he had said.

"I'll try, Mr. Tompkinson."

Then the door banged and he heard their feet hurrying across the pavement outside.

He had given them twenty minutes' grace, idling as he cleared his work away, with one quick dash to his suitcase to take out the directories and throw them under a table in the corner. Then into the strong-room. He had smiled as he used his three keys, one by one; smiled at the caution of the Bank that ensured that nothing could be opened except in the presence of three, but ignored the human frailty of carelessness.

He remembered now he had been thinking, as he put the fivers to one side and packed the bundles of used pound notes tight into the bag, that it was an even chance he would be caught and that was his only worry; the money was there and he was taking it as the only means of getting out of the groove. Whatever happened, he would not pretend that he was in the least bit sorry.

He had broken the seal of the last bundle and stuffed some forty notes into his coat-pocket, then closed his case, and made a last check on the identity card bought at such expense in Soho months before. With a click of finality, the strong-room door had closed behind him, the front lights were switched on, the burglar-alarm set. Then he was outside the front door.

As he had walked across the road with his suitcase, the policeman on the corner had touched his helmet.

It had been as easy as that—

The sounds of rescue were getting closer all the time; suddenly, above the bangs and tearing, he became aware of something quite different. From just behind him came a grunting and then the rasp of heavy breath.

A cheerful voice said, "Got you." Then added, "How many down there?"

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Heskin strained back but could not see. "Only two of us," he said.

"Look, mate—I'm six feet from you and can't get no closer than this. The doctor won't get no farther. But I'll tell him."

Heskin heard the sound of creaking timber as Cheerful Voice changed his position.

"You're going to take a lot of getting out," he went on. "We can't cut through from this side on account of the two coaches on top. If we weaken here, the whole bloody lot will come down—"

There was another of those horrible tearing sounds from above and a little more dirt fell.

"Blimey!" said Cheerful Voice. "I'd best get out for the Doc. It's arse first—so it may take a bit of time. Is there anything you want?"

"A drink," said Heskin.

"I'll see what I can do. The heavy cranes are on their way now and they'll whip this lot off in no time. So long—and keep your pecker up."

The grunts and heaving faded away. Heskin drowsed again, until suddenly a new voice spoke. "I'm the doctor," it said.

In a few short sentences Heskin gave him their state, what had happened, and what he had tried to do for his companion.

"Well, I can't reach you—and if you can't get near his ankles, you've done everything possible," said the doctor. "I'm going to pass in some morphia—in case he comes round and is in pain. Just stick the needle in his arm and press the capsule. There's a drink for you—don't give him any, though; you'll pump out of him the little blood that's left."

Heskin waited; in a little while there was a scraping behind him, then bouncing and swaying over his head was—of all things—a child's shrimping-net. He reached up and caught it, taking from the mesh the drug, and half a bottle of whisky.

"Thanks," he said, "especially for the drink."

"Pinched from the waiting-room, mate," came Cheerful Voice, muffled and distant.

The doctor said, "It won't be long now. The heavy cranes are here and—" The rest was lost in another roar while the whole place shook.

"We'd better get to hell out of here, Doc; it's too bloody dang—uncomfortable." Cheerful Voice sounded urgent.

Heskin could appreciate the point of what he had started to say: it was extremely dangerous, and they had risked their lives in coming in. The only difference was that they could start the attempt to get out again.

"Hang on," said the doctor. "We're going out now to get them to start." There was the noise of the rescuers fading away as they retreated, and then he was alone.

Heskin took a good pull at the bottle; propped on one elbow, he glanced across at the white face beside him. The vestige of a plan came surging up in his mind, only to fade quickly as the eyelids

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started to flutter and the breath grew deeper. He was coming round—so that was that. As Heskin lay back waiting, his mind switched over again to yesterday.

—It had been foolproof.

In the train to Paddington and across to Victoria he had played the dutiful nephew off for the week-end. He had mingled with the crowds on the station and drifted to the Continental Booking Office where he had taken a second-class single for Paris; a contrived and heated argument over the change had made certain that the clerk would remember him when the hunt started.

Then to Charing Cross, where from six shops in turn he had bought everything to clothe himself from underclothes to waterproof and a new suitcase. In the station cloakroom he had changed right through, transferring the money and his few belongings, packing his cast-off clothes in the old case, which he sent to Sevenoaks, luggage in advance, "to be called for."

At the faded hotel in a back street near King's Cross, after an early meal sent up to his room, he had locked himself in to wait for the morning. The last job was the sorting; he had gone through the money, note by note; any note traceable by a cashier's mark that could not be rubbed out was torn to shreds, and with the unwanted tickets for Paris and Sevenoaks, flushed down the toilet.

He had slept very well.

Then this morning—only now it seemed an age ago—there had been the slow, calculated walk to the station, the booking of a single to Edinburgh, the careful selection of an empty first-class smoker a few minutes before departure. Edinburgh? Any one of the big towns in the North would do; anywhere he could drop off, hide the money, and work his way into some cash racket.

He had been buried behind his paper, the guard's whistle was shrilling on the platform, when the carriage door had crashed open; someone had stumbled over his legs, a bag had been thrown on the seat, and a panting body collapsed into the far corner. A quick glance had shown a tall, dark man in a camel-hair coat; then Heskin had gone back to his reading.

They were out of the tunnels and up the grade to Finsbury Park when the uncomfortable pricking sensation started—He knew that he was being stared at through the paper; he lowered the barrier, and just caught the other's eyes as they flicked away. Making a business of lighting a cigarette, he stared back and the uncomfortable feeling, magnified a hundred times, transferred itself to the pit of his stomach. *He knew this man—the face was horribly familiar . . .*

The other got up and turned to the mirror as he fiddled with his tie; when he sat down, he was staring quite openly and smiling.

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Heskin cleared his throat. "Haven't we met before?" he said.

The smile broadened, "Strange meeting." The voice came low and pleasant, the accent too precise for an Englishman. "Strange meeting, my friend. But we meet every day—each time you shave. Look in that mirror."

Before, like an automaton, Heskin had risen and turned to look in the glass, he knew the answer. He had been looking at his own face. *The stranger was his double.*

There had been laughter, a few casual questions, and the promise of a drink later to celebrate the meeting, then both had gone back to their reading.

They were on the down grade to Hatfield, gaining speed with each quarter-mile post, when it happened. The brakes had gone on hard, once—twice—and a third time, with a force that made the sliding wheels scream on the rails.

Then, a horrible splintering roar swept down the train from the front. He remembered, like a photograph, the look on the other's face, his suitcase poised rocking on the edge of the rack. As he tried to swing his legs up in an effort of protection, the compartment had burst and the partition walls closed in on them with a snap.

Then darkness—

There was a stirring beside him and the searching eyes were open again, looking up towards his suitcase: the voice went on as if there had been no pause: "You took that from your Bank?"

"Yes."

"How much?"

It seemed that truth came easily to Heskin. "I don't know exactly," he said, "but I should think about five thousand."

"If they do not catch you—when it has gone, what—?"

Heskin shrugged. "I shall find something."

The ice-cold hand found his again and the eyes were fixed on his; each word cut painfully.

"I could offer you so much more, if only—"

It fitted in with all those thoughts, the plan he had started.

"If only what—?" Heskin said, almost brutally.

"I will give you everything: my identity—my possessions, if you will continue my journey."

"Where were you going, then?"

"Norway."

Norway . . . Above them now was the rattle of chains: rescue was getting very close. But Heskin was not thinking of it. That word and one other, with all their implications, raced round in his mind.

A passport had been the only weak link in his plan. Now it was offered and fitted exactly into the pattern of the other word.

"Norway," he repeated softly. It reminded him of his mother —that tall, fair-haired woman he could hardly remember, who had

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told him folk-tales of troll and giant from her far-away, native land, and had taught him laboriously her Norwegian tongue. How he had loathed the drudgery of learning it, and had thrust the hated language to the back of his young mind, but he had never forgotten his Norwegian. Now, it might come in usefully . . .

There was shouting and the sound of feet far above them now; the cranes must be getting into position.

" What can you give me? " Heskin asked carefully. " Soon you will—"

" I? In a few minutes, I shall know—the final answer. Do you want me to take with me the only chance of salvation *for you*—you fool? "

There was a silence, and then Heskin said, " What must I do? "

" Swear that you will go on."

" I swear to try."

The hand gripped his arm again. " I'll accept that promise. There's no time to tell all—I'm nearly gone. It is hidden—if sold to the right people—rich for life."

" *Where—what?* "

He took no notice of that urgent question; he was lying quite still, staring up at the roof. " Change everything over in our pockets—now," he said. " It will be amusing to be buried as an absconding bank clerk . . ."

He was silent as Heskin bent over, making the change; soon his few possessions and the rest of the money from his pocket were in the other's jacket, and he had taken keys, passport, and a bulging notecase. Then Heskin bent over him. Their faces were almost touching. " Now tell me," he said.

The voice faded to a whisper: " Listen carefully—Address in my wallet—Tromsø—contact at once. She has map but," he gasped, " *she does not know where.* Don't trust—until you have seen—map." He paused, drawing on his last reserve of strength. " Credit 100,000 kroner—Norske Bank, Bergen. Practise signature from passport."

It was like catching the last drips of water from a broken pitcher; hating himself, Heskin took a hard, desperate grip on the injured man's shoulders.

" Where is the place? " he shouted.

The eyes, filming, turning inwards, were blank. " Nordkapp. *Under the Hornets' Nest.* You . . ."

The head dropped, falling against him. There was nothing but the clanging of hammers and the rattle of chains above; the heavy cranes must be getting ready to lift. Heskin stayed quite still, holding the body close; then there was a last movement as the head turned. The voice came again in a strong, matter-of-fact tone.

" I think you should know that she—"

In mid-sentence, like a light switched out, his head fell back, and he died. Heskin laid him down gently; there was nothing to learn now.

As he waited in the gloom, looking at the still face, fingering the

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wallet in his pocket, afraid and wondering, he hardly noticed the sudden quiet as the cranes began to hoist. He did not see the great wheel above him jerk and inch up out of the jagged hole. After the one urgent shout, there was only a second's terror before everything rushed down with a roar to carry him away . . .

The nightmare went on and on.

Between the sickness and fumes of ether, Heskin found himself walking in a garden. But the trees and flowers seemed to have strange leaves; green pound notes hung from every branch and fluttered, whispering to him.

As memory came back, his eyes darted from the bedside table with its shrouded clutter of bottles and kidney dishes, along the bare walls, across the polished floor, looking for something that he dreaded to find.

The pain surged up as he screwed himself over to see. But there was no one sitting in the chair at that side of the bed, no dark blue uniform with the high light above the bed glinting on the silver buttons; the police were not there, waiting to pull him into the clutches of the law.

The relief was so intense that helpless tears started to prick his eyes. Then his gaze travelled to the only alien thing in the room; on a table by the window, in the jam-jar apology of a hospital vase was a sheaf of beautiful flame-coloured gladioli.

The door opened and a white, stiff-rustling nurse came in, followed by a doctor. The nurse moved round to Heskin's good side and bent over him; he saw that she had buck-teeth, and a face like a horse.

"So you've come back to us at last! You've been a naughty boy, Mr. Bergman. All that shouting about hornets and trying to get out of bed. Now, promise you'll be good." This, while she tucked and patted the bedclothes; he could feel archness flowing from her.

"I'll try," said Heskin. "But who sent the flowers?"

She looked surprised. "Why, Miss Rassmussen, of course. It was the only address we could find in your papers. We wired her as next-of-kin. She had them sent—and there's a letter, too."

"Can I have it? And the rest of my things?"

"When doctor says so." She glanced across the room.

The doctor, washing his hands at the basin, looked round.

"Of course—do what you like so long as you keep still and don't worry. Do you know that you are a very lucky man, Mr. Bergman?"

Each time the name was spoken, he felt better. "Lucky?"

The doctor was drying his hands. "To be in such good shape—notwithstanding the damage!"

"What's the full extent?" Heskin asked anxiously.

"A foot injury, a fractured arm, and a suspected fracture of the skull—but there was nothing so serious, luckily. That crack on the head occurred when the top carriage came down on you. You do remember, I suppose?"

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It would have to be done so gently, so very carefully; Heskin tried to look puzzled.

"I can remember being in a carriage with someone—trapped. But before that—there's nothing."

The doctor did not seem surprised. "Complete amnesia is not uncommon after a clout like that. But don't worry, it will all come back." He stopped at the end of the bed. "And having said that, I'm going to be the first one to worry you. Will you be up to seeing someone—say, tomorrow? I would put it off, but they are hanging round the hospital all the time and generally getting in our hair—"

"Who are?"

"The police."

When they left Heskin alone with the pitiful pile of Bergman possessions, his hand ran over them as they lay in a row on the good-arm side of the bed.

He turned to the dark, well-worn wallet. In the back pocket was £190—mostly in fivers.

The passport announced that Erik Bergman was a British subject, an agent, born in Birmingham on 27.3.11; that he had dark eyes and black hair; that he resided in London. The only other thing it showed was Mr. Bergman's addiction to travel: since the war the visa pages were nearly full of exit and entry stamps in different colours. Most significant of all was the letter that was lying folded inside: the Bergen bank announced receipt of a draft from Berne of 100,000 kroner, together with specimen signatures. Here was clean, untraceable money in Bergen; £5,000 would be a good start, even if he threw everything else to the winds—just go over, collect, and vanish! But stronger came the memory of Bergman's whispering voice, urging him to go on.

Banishing the thought of this easier way out, he picked up the envelope that might contain the contents of the pockets, ripped it open, took out the key-ring, and turned his attention to the thick briefcase. As he fumbled to find the right key, he tried to avoid the sight of the scratched pigskin with the dark brown stains.

The thickness was soon explained, for Mr. Bergman had used it as an overnight bag. Stuffed in the front compartment were pyjamas, hairbrushes, and shaving tackle; behind these his searching hand came on what he had hoped for—a thin sheaf of papers.

He spread them out on the coverlet, scanning them carefully to start with, then turning over faster and faster. He need not have bothered: the sheets of crabbed black writing and the newspaper cuttings were in neither of the languages that he knew. Some were in German, he was sure, and some perhaps in Italian—or Spanish. But he could not read a word of it, and there was not a living soul whom he dared ask to translate.

As he started to put them away, something caught his eye. Two words that repeated themselves again and again, whatever the language. *Dolmann—Hofer*—Names, or places, he wondered.

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With the next entry of Horse-face, now known to be Nurse Chandler, he asked irritably what had happened to the rest of his luggage, and his clothes.

"But you won't be getting up for weeks yet, Mr. Bergman! Whatever are you thinking of?"

"I want to see them."

She shook her head. "No more luggage has come from the railway people. And the suit—I'm afraid you won't see that again. It was just sodden." Her voice trailed away.

When he had been put down for the night, he lay for a long time staring at the ceiling, thinking. He wondered how he could go on when every way he turned there seemed to be a blank wall. He did not remember until just before sleep came that there might be no chance to go on at all; everything depended on the visit from the police the next morning.

They must have thought him fairly important, for they sent an Inspector.

He came quietly through the door, tiptoeing across the floor as if in the presence of death, to seat himself on the very edge of a chair; then with notebook open and pencil poised, he surveyed Heskin with the look of mournful satisfaction that officialdom reserves for the very ill.

"I don't like reminding you of a terrible experience, sir—but we are making certain inquiries and it seems that you may be able to help us."

"I will if I can, of course," said Heskin. Under the bedclothes, the fingers of his good hand were biting into the flesh of his thigh through the thin pyjamas. This was the point of no return.

"I'm afraid I don't remember very much," he added.

The Inspector said, "We hope you will remember enough for us. There was another man in your compartment—when it happened. Do you remember him?"

Heskin was surprised that his own voice was so steady. "Not before the accident—I'm afraid I can't remember any of that. But after—we were so close—it seemed so long."

"Did he talk to you, sir?"

"Some of the time—when he was conscious."

"What about?"

He tried to seem hesitant. "Can you tell me, is he—?"

"He's dead, sir."

"Then there's no harm—I suppose it really is my duty—"

The Inspector inclined his head. "I think you are quite right, and you can do him no ill service now."

"Well, there was a lot of money lying about. He talked about it—said something about it being stolen from a bank." It was surprising how easily it came out; to commit himself and set the seal on Bergman's idea that it would be amusing to be buried as an absconding bank clerk. There were a few more easy questions and then the Inspector shut his notebook with a snap.

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"Thank you very much, Mr. Bergman. I won't tire you any more. But your story confirms our inquiry. What he told you was quite true."

"Poor devil!"

The Inspector shrugged. "Perhaps it was lucky it turned out that way for him—in the end."

"Did you see him before—I suppose he must have been buried some time ago?"

"Yes, I did—and he wasn't a pleasant sight. He was terribly smashed up."

If the one man who had seen them both could look so straight at him as he answered the question, Heskin was safe indeed; there was no more to say.

He relaxed slowly and completely as the broad blue back of the Inspector disappeared round the door. Now he had time to think, to plan; there would have to be caution. He determined, at all costs, to conceal his knowledge of Norwegian. With his left hand he began to scrawl a draft reply to the English letter Miss Rassmussen had addressed c/o the hospital authorities. Chandler would copy out his draft later. Planning had started.

Slowly, he traced the words of his reply, then stopped to read what he had written.

27 *April*, 1947.

Dear Miss Rassmussen, Thank you very much for the lovely flowers and your note. It was very good of you to think of me.

I, too, am worried over the question of delay, but I am sure you know that it is outside my control. I will bring the little I have just as soon as the hospital allows me to travel. My nurse is writing this as I cannot yet use . . .

That's just the job, he thought. And, truthfully, I shall be bringing something, those words that Bergman—

The thought died suddenly; through his concentration, he felt those pricking fingers reach up into his mind. He was being watched. He looked up and saw a face peering at him round the edge of the door.

It was a little face—and not a nice one. The sloping, bald head was fringed with sprouts of sandy hair, the eyes narrow and bright, and beneath the long, thin nose a ginger moustache hung like a curtain over the mouth. The face looked at him, the eyes unblinking. "Mithter Bergman?" it lisped.

"Yes," said Heskin.

In a flash, the short, thin body was round the door and scuttling across the floor towards the bed; in one movement it seemed to scoop up a chair, slide it beneath itself, and sit down, though all the while the eyes never left Heskin's face. Now they were at a range of three feet.

"Mithter Bergman," it said again, "my name ith Hopkinthon—I've come about the papérth."

Insurance. The warning flashed through his mind. It might

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be some accident policy of Bergman's. They might want proof of identity. Careful.

"What papers?" he asked politely.

Mr. Hopkinson ignored this. "My employerth want to relieve you of a rethponthibility for documenth they think you are not in a pothition to handle."

Heskin was annoyed. "The only papers I hold are my own, and I am quite capable of looking after them myself, thank you. Who are your employers, anyway?"

Mr. Hopkinson went straight on with his theme. "My employerth inthtruct me to thay that in return they are prepared to let bygonth be bygonth. In the future, you will not be molethted—in any way."

"Would you mind getting to hell out of here?" His good hand was still lying on top of the draft letter; the bell-push was far back on the same side behind the pillow. It was impossible to cover one and reach the other.

The little man's eyes slid up obliquely to the briefcase hanging on the wall, then down to the hand that covered the paper.

"Writing letterth?" he said.

Through the silence came the brisk click-click of heels on the parquet of the passage, and the little man uncoiled like a spring. He sprang sideways, driving his elbow into Heskin's ribs, with one hand tearing at the letter, the other reaching up to the wall. The beginning of a shout ended in a strangled grunt, there was a tear of paper, and the little brown figure was halfway back across the room before the door swung wide, and Nurse Chandler walked in.

The little man did not pause; holding the briefcase in front of him, he put his head down and butted her straight in the pit of the stomach. With a crash they skidded together in an untidy heap against the door-post; then he was up on his knees and away, with Chandler, holding her side, a bad second. There was a quick rat's patter of feet, followed by her slower, pounding stride; a swing door banged twice; then silence.

Questions, statements, the police all over again, for no one had been quick enough to stop the intruder. The whole incident was dismissed as the raid of a sneak-thief. There were no further visits.

He became almost glad that the problem of having to decipher those papers had been removed from him; somehow he was certain that they contained the story, not the clue. He alone carried the broken fragments of that in his head.

There was one further consolation; the torn part of the letter that had remained in his hand after the struggle contained the only three important words in it, "Dear Miss Rassmussen."

The days went on through convalescence and the weary business of learning to use his foot again, until his final discharge. He was passed fit, and ready to go on.

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On his last day in England, the exchange of vague letters with the Rassmussen culminated in a wire. *Have booked room Bristol Hotel Bergen. Meet you on arrival.* Now, hospital bill paid, Heskin stood on the station platform, waiting for the express to Newcastle. He had one small bag, a first single to Bergen, and no more than forty pounds left until he could touch the bank deposit—and that was on the far side of the drag-net of Customs and Passport.

He stood, lonely and a little bewildered, holding his travelling-grip in the left hand, the other arm still in a sling. From down the line came a faint whistle and all around him the pandemonium increased.

Just before the great bulk of the locomotive slid by to block out the sunlight there was one of those sudden, momentary chasms of silence. In this, somewhere behind him, he heard a remembered voice, quiet and distinct. "Thath him," it said, "with the little brown bag and no hat." The rest was lost in the hiss and clank of the passing engine.

Somehow, he kept his head. He put down his bag, bending as if to fumble with his shoe-lace, then quickly turned to glance upwards. There was only time for one glimpse, but it showed, pressed back against the bookstall, the little brown man of the hospital, clutching at the arm of a giant.

He was so tall that the hurried upward glance had no time to reach his face; there was only one impression—grey. In turn, his eyes took in the grey suede shoes, knife-creased trousers, grey mackintosh; nothing but grey—and the stillness. As Heskin turned towards the slowing carriages, the old thrill of fear shot through him.

It was strange to sit in a train again, quietly, with no thought that the rocking might start, that the splintering roar might hurl itself down on him for the second time.

He opened his book, but the words were just a blurred jumble on the page. Again and again the hateful voice kept niggling. "In return for the documenth, you will not be molethted." So what? There were other things to think of now: prying Customs officers and Passport officials.

Suddenly the light in the compartment dimmed as if a cloud was passing across the sun. A great bulk was blocking out most of the window space on the corridor side.

It was the same grey mackintosh, bulging over massive shoulders, but now he could see the face under the wide-brimmed hat, half in profile as the man leaned on the window rail, staring out over the countryside. It was square—that face, with the long straight chin and gigantic lantern jaw; the forehead a great cliff jutting out over sunken eye-sockets.

Before the man turned to look into the compartment, Heskin had seen the likeness: one of those strange, lonely stone idols on that island in the Pacific had come to life—Easter Island—he had seen photographs.

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He dropped his eyes to the book and kept them there while fear pricked out sweat on the back of his neck. When he dared to look up again, the stranger had gone.

Soon the steward came round, ringing his little bell for lunch. As he turned towards the restaurant-car, Heskin saw a long grey form detach itself from the far end and start moving forward. He pressed on the heels of the man in front, listening all through the jolting journey down the coaches for the soft-padding feet that he knew were closing in behind. Then they were through the last connection, past the steaming kitchen, in the car itself, where the chief steward was allocating seats.

The man in front filled the last place of four, and as Heskin was directed by the steward to a seat at a table for two, he saw the eyes and professional smile of welcome tilt up to a point high above his head; a second later, the grey bulk brushed by and turned to sit down opposite.

Separated by no more than two feet of tablecloth and the jingling, jumping crockery, he was no longer fearsome, but only impressive. The actions that followed, the exact squaring of his knives and forks, the opening and tucking of a napkin, were slow and precise, as if part of a carefully-worked-out plan. Then he looked up at Heskin who was struggling, one-handed, to lift his bag onto the rack.

"Allow me, sir."

The voice was deep, harsh, and somehow cold. He leaned forward and took the bag, lifting it slowly above them. It seemed as if his hands were reluctant to lose contact.

"Thank you."

"Not at all. I should have offered sooner. Travel must be difficult. Your arm is broken?"

"Yes. I had an accident."

Then the soup arrived, and there was only trivial, broken conversation from then until coffee was served. As the steward left them, the grey man came to the point.

He removed his napkin, folded it carefully, and then felt in his pocket. As the flat leather cigar-case was held out towards Heskin, he noticed the hand holding it—broad as a spade, the back covered with fine black hairs.

"A cigar, Mr. Bergman?"

"No, thank you."

"Do you know Bergen well?"

"Bergen? But how—?"

The other laughed at the look on his face. "There is a label on your bag, with name and destination," he said softly.

"As a matter of fact, I don't know it at all."

"You go for a holiday—or a business trip, perhaps?"

Heskin had had enough. "Entirely pleasure," he answered shortly, as he signalled to the steward for his bill.

"Thanks, but I can manage," he added as the other rose to help with the bag. When he left the table, there was no attempt to

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follow him; perhaps, after the short, stiff bow, the eyes lingered a little too long on the bag, but the man stayed where he was, utterly still, drawing slowly on his cigar, and Heskin did not meet him again until they were on the boat.

The walk down the long echoing passages of the Tyne Quay at Newcastle, the few questions asked and answered, and the finality of the dull thud of the stamp on his passport had gone through easily enough. Only afterwards did he remember the surge of relief that came in the quiet of his cabin when he heard, above the hum of generators and the hiss of forced draught, the clangs on the engine-room telegraph. *Slow Ahead.* It was good-bye to the grind from nine till five, the cheap digs, the bad cooking, and the smell and feel of counting other people's money.

Once after dinner in the saloon, once the next morning in his walk round the deck, Heskin saw the tall grey figure regarding him from a distance. After lunch, they met.

He was aft, in the place on the stern rails where, the night before, he had watched the last black lines of England dwindle as the night slid up from the way ahead. Now there was nothing but the empty rim of the horizon, with the white path of the *Jupiter*'s wake stretching out over the edge.

The harsh voice spoke from behind him without warning. "Still looking back, Mr. Bergman? I have always thought that a mistake."

"There's nothing much else to do," said Heskin. "I'm just killing time, waiting."

"Ah yes," said the grey man, "thinking of your coming holiday, no doubt." He had come forward to the rail, and was staring down at the hissing trail of the wake.

"Your holiday—will you spend all of it in Bergen?"

"I'm not really sure yet—we may move about a bit."

It was a silly slip and had to be covered; afterwards, he wondered why he had said what he did. "I'm meeting my fiancée," he added quickly.

They touched for the first time as a great hand shot out to take his. The fingers that wrapped round his palm felt like steel rods and his own thumb recoiled from the rasp of the stiff black hairs against his skin.

"I must congratulate you doubly. Norwegian girls make fine wives. Do you plan to marry soon, and then to live in England?"

"Quite soon, I hope. And, of course, we shall live at home."

He was still turned towards Heskin, head tilted on one side, the hollow, dead eyes searching his face.

"You puzzle me—your occupation, I mean. I would guess you belong to one of the professions."

"I'm an agent," said Heskin brusquely. "And you?"

Leaning on the rail, the other examined the ash on his cigar.

"I suppose that is what you would call me too. I buy things, and sell them. I've been in business a long time, and I think I can claim success. There are some in business who say I'm hard,

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but it's not really so. I will pay a fair price; but if anyone is obstinate, too greedy, then—"

With a jerk he tossed the cigar-butt over the side; both watched as it curved in a long arc to die with a hiss in the creaming water.

"—Then they go down like that," said the grey man softly. "I always get what I want in the end." He straightened and looked at his watch. "Come up to the bows for a moment, Mr. Bergman. I would like to show you something."

As they walked along the deck the hand encircling Heskin's arm felt like an iron band.

"There is one thing I have learnt in my business experience, Mr. Bergman: that whatever is the enterprise on which you embark, it is as well to understand exactly what you are doing. To foresee the final outcome and to weigh every risk—of failure or success It is good advice—you agree?"

"Very," said Heskin.

There was a cool breeze on the foredeck. The iron clamp did not relax as they went on up past the capstans to the very stem.

"There." The grey man let go and pointed. "There, it looks so beautiful. But it can be hard, cruel, and sometimes unexpected."

At first it looked like a long white cloud on the edge of the sea; then Heskin made out the blue-grey of the foothills, behind the high mountains still dusted with snow.

Norway.

All afternoon, the blue-grey coastline hung on the edge of the sea, growing longer, splitting into detail. All afternoon, Heskin had been left in peace to stare at it, leaning on the deck-rail, wrapt in his thoughts as he tried to puzzle out the next move.

The next move. His eyes were not taking in the slow and beautiful change that was unfolding before them; he did not really see the woven green pattern clear into rounded, pine-clad hills, or the little scattered splashes of colour grow into gay, painted wooden houses nestling among the trees. Only the message of increasing size was registering in his brain. The grey man faded into the background as, minute by minute, Norway grew larger, closer; the time, nearer the meeting with his ally. It would be more dangerous than anything of the enemy he knew.

There were three possible ways to play it. To hang around long enough to collect the bank credit, and then clear out alone; but with two following, then—and where could he go? To stay with this girl whom he had been told not to trust, hoping that some form of bluff would give him time to find out the past and consolidate for the future; or to save all complication of lies and throw himself on her mercy with the unbelievable truth.

The first and last were both too dangerous; in each lay the possibility of a trail being laid back to England . . . and gaol.

It would have to be the middle way; how, he could not yet see. Perhaps loss of memory would work; however thin and futile it sounded, she would have to believe it. Only one thing was certain:

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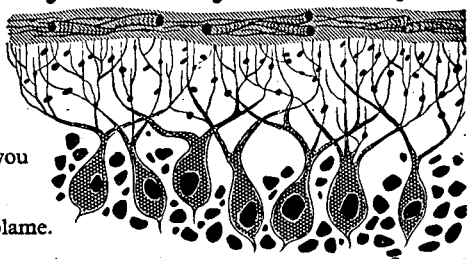

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she had far more need of him. He smiled as he thought of his four words: *Under the Hornets' Nest.*

They were rounding the long, thin spit of green fields and yellow sand that protects Stavanger harbour when that voice came suddenly over his shoulder. "I hope I did not presume in thinking we might travel on together, Mr. Bergman? I would like to show you a little of our country."

Heskin had been thinking fast. "I can't really tell you yet. There may be a message for me."

"Your fiancée, I suppose?"

"Yes." Damn the man—he never forgot a thing. It was something else that would have to be sorted out.

Heskin stooped to pick up his handgrip: the other stood quite still, staring at it.

"Well, I'd better go and find out," Heskin said.

"Yes, but you have plenty of time. I will wait here. Do you want to carry that case all over the ship? It will be quite safe with me."

It was Heskin's turn to smile.

"Thank you—but they are my personal papers and I think I had better take them with me. It would be an unfair responsibility for you if anything went wrong."

"Well, I hope you stay in Bergen for a few days, as I have to be there on business; we might see something of each other. But in case that is not to be, I insist that you dine with me tonight. Let us make it late, so that we can watch our passage through the fiords before the light goes. I will meet you in the bar at six." Without waiting for refusal or acceptance, he turned on his heel.

It was a strange meal, but not the ordeal that Heskin had expected. The grey man was a good talker and seemed determined to keep the conversation away from anything that concerned their past or future. Heskin was only too glad to listen and, indeed, it was he who asked the first question.

As he stirred his coffee, he said, "You haven't told me your name."

His host blew out a stream of cigar smoke.

"Forgive me. It is very rude. But seeing your name on your bag quite put introductions out of my mind." There was a pause. "Mine is Graustein," he added.

Heskin watched the snaking tongues of smoke that were floating round his head.

It was late when they finished, and it was a relief to be wished a friendly good-night in the public glare of the lounge without having to brave the darkness of the deck. He went straight down to his cabin.

After he had switched on the light, he stood for a moment and looked at the neatly folded pile of blankets on the top bunk. He had quite forgotten that his cabin companion had mentioned that he was leaving at Stavanger. His glance went down to his own berth. Unbelieving at first, then with that quick, sick surge of fear,

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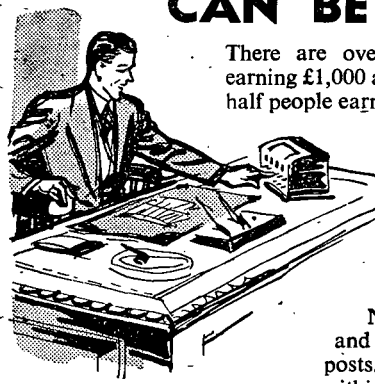

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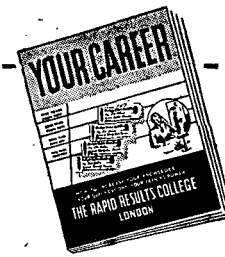

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he started the futile, hurried search; he leaned back against the door, sweating. It couldn't be. They had been together nearly all the time . . . Then, there must be another of them on board. It didn't really matter how it had been worked. His suitcase was gone.

The worst of it was not the loss, but that it should vanish. He took out his wallet and thumbed through the foreign notes that were left. He might reckon five hundred and thirty kroner altogether. A passport, and the clothes he stood in were all he had left. He must report it, and, more important, warn his ally that the hounds were on the trail. But *was* she his ally? He remembered Bergman's whispered words. He would have to go on to get more money. He would have to risk that.

At the Purser's Office, the word suitcase was hardly out of his mouth before it was lifted up and placed on the counter in front of him.

" It was handed in by one of the stewards only ten minutes ago, sir. He found it lying on " B " deck. Would you mind signing for it? "

As he signed—and the Bergman signature was coming easily now—he said, " When do we dock? "

" About six-thirty, sir. And we try to get the ship clear in an hour to help in the turn-round."

" Would it be possible to make a telephone call then—I mean, before I go ashore? "

The Purser looked doubtful. " Well, we get our land-line aboard by about seven. I suppose you could, if you care to come down here then."

" I would be most grateful if I could. It's very important."

He carried the suitcase back to the cabin and bolted the door. Nothing had been taken from it but he knew that everything had been handled; perhaps the worst part of it was that the lining had been slit at each corner by a razor-blade, but so cleverly and carefully that had he not been looking for it, he would not have known it had been done. The door remained bolted, but he did not sleep very well that night.

Voices, the rattle of the steam capstans, and the scrape of the gangway being hoisted inboard woke him the next morning. The cabin was quite dark, the porthole showing nothing but the slow heave of green weed, and barnacles on stout timber. He dressed quickly, packed his bag, and then drew back into a corner of the bottom bunk, chain-smoking, as he waited for the bustle and noise of footsteps to die down in the passage outside.

In ten minutes there was no sound beyond the door; even the drumming of the planks of the gangway had thinned to sharp, individual sounds. His hand was on the bolt when a heavy tread came louder, clearer, each step sounding from the distance of the passage outside. He flattened back against the wall, holding his breath.

The footsteps halted. There was a pause and a light rap on the door panel.

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"Mr. Bergman!" The harsh voice sounded urgent.

He stayed frozen, his eyes fixed on the door handle, watching its slow turn and the sudden bulge of the edge of the wood towards the jamb as pressure was exerted from outside; as he swallowed, the noise in his throat sounded like a thunderclap. There was another knock, his name called louder, and then the steps, more hurried now, died away to silence in the direction of the main companion-way.

Though it was cold in that thin air of a northern dawn, he found that he was sweating. It was another ten minutes before he dared slip the bolt and hurry down the deserted passage to the Purser's Office. In a few moments, he was talking to the hall porter at the Bristol Hotel.

He said, "My name's Bergman—Erik Bergman. I believe you have a room booked for me by Miss Rassmussen."

"Just a moment, sir."

In the pause that followed, he looked back over his shoulder, through the glass doors of the Purser's Office to the empty lounge beyond.

"Miss Rassmussen is here already, waiting for you, sir," came the porter's voice. "She would like to speak to you. Hold the line and I'll put you through."

The voice that came was low, warm—but held authority. "Marianne Rassmussen here. Where are you, Mr. Bergman? What's happened?"

"Still on the *Jupiter*. I had to get hold of you before we met. There's trouble already."

"What—?" The cut in the voice went deeper.

"I've been followed—all the way from the hospital. And my bag has been stolen and searched."

"Was there—anything—in it?"

"No."

"There's a big man," he went on, "square face, large chin, and always dressed in grey. He says his name is Graustein."

"I don't know him. How can I help?"

"There's too much for me to explain now, but he's been talking to me—asking questions. I slipped up once, and the only way I could get out of it was—by saying you were my fiancée."

There was so long a pause that he thought she had hung up; then her voice came back, cold and careful: "It must have been a very intimate conversation—to qualify me for this honour."

"I'm sorry—I know it sounds an impertinence but it couldn't be helped. The point is if I can't shake him off—and he sees us when we meet, try to act as if you were."

There was a cynical little laugh from the other end of the line. "I'll do my best, but don't bother to get rid of him. Come straight away. I want my breakfast."

"But how shall I know—?"

"Know me? You won't. But I shall know you, so it will be all right."

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NESCAFÉ

129.G

ANOTHER OF **NESTLÉ'S** GOOD THINGS

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He stood for a moment after the click of the receiver, staring at it. She knew him and she had spoken nothing but English. But Bergman had not been an Englishman, he was sure of that; then, perhaps some other nationality, unable to speak Norwegian. So, there might be another card for him to play—perhaps the trump. On his part, there would be no speaking of that language, but a lot of listening.

He climbed up on deck and had a quick look round. Neither there nor on the almost empty quay could he see a sign of the grey man. Then he let his eyes lift to the first sight of Bergen—the clean, white, shining city, set at the head of the long fiord, splashed with colour by the gay suburban houses rising in tiers among the tumbled firs of the foothills.

Down the gangway and across the quay, through currency control and Passport Office, hurried on by yawning officials, longing to get the last passengers through and themselves home to bed; then out of the dock gates and into the first taxi on the rank.

"Bristol Hotel."

It was strange how the fear of the cabin had fallen away to the back of his mind now there was so much else to think about, so much to look at. He did not notice the other car, a black saloon, that pulled away directly his cab started moving and fell in behind in the stream of traffic.

Down through the old town, rumbling over the cobbles of the fish market, then smoother over concrete streets flanked with big blocks of plate glass and chromium. The cab jerked to a stop, and he was walking up the stone steps towards the swing doors of the Bristol.

Inside, he stood still for a moment, his eyes wandering round, uncertain. Then from the side came the quick click of heels on the marble floor.

"Erik, dearest."

Two arms were round him and a soft cheek pressed against his. She stood back, looking up and searching his face, and he saw that she was beautiful; something had happened to him. It was in that moment when she held him close, when his face had been pressed against her hair. It was long, a shining, silky yellow, smelling faintly of honey.

As she looked at him her face clouded, "Oh—but you look so drawn—so tired. Come and sit down." She drew him over to one of the sofas that stood against the wall. She sat, half turned towards him, still holding one of his hands; then her eyes went over his head towards the entrance.

"Stick to English. Don't turn round," her lips just framed the words. "A big man, grey raincoat, looks as if he had been carved out of rock—"

"Yes."

"He's just come in. Now he's looking round."

She dropped her eyes to his. "Quick. Before he comes—how much does he know?"

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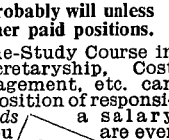

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" Only what I told you."

" I don't mean that—the other part—how you came to help? "

She stopped suddenly, and Heskin could feel the shadow of the presence standing beside them. He turned and scrambled to his feet.

" Why, Herr Graustein—how pleasant. I didn't think I should have the opportunity of presenting my fiancée. This is a fellow-passenger who travelled from England with me, darling. Herr Graustein—Miss Rassmussen."

Graustein gave a short bow. " The pleasure is mine," he said, " the more so because it is unexpected. From the way your fiancé hurried off the boat, I expected there would be a train to catch and that by now you would be on your way to the mountains, or the fiords."

Marianne sat very still, as she looked up at him. " We should have been, Herr Graustein, but Erik is so tired. I had not realized. Now he must rest for a few days before we go on."

Graustein's eyes had not left her face. " You are fortunate, *Herr* Bergman, in having a fiancée who makes up her mind so quickly."

Marianne got up. " Now you must excuse us. I want to take him up to his room. Good-bye, Herr Graustein."

Again there was that short bow and the wintry smile. " Only au revoir, I hope, Frøken. I am sure that we shall meet again." He turned on his heel and went out through the swing doors.

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In the lift Marianne said, "Graustein. How appropriate!"

"Why?"

She gave him an odd look. "But naturally, Graustein—means grey stone."

As he shaved and washed, he could see her in the mirror of the basin; she was lying stretched out on the bed, hands clasped behind her head, cigarette in her mouth.

Between the lathering and strokes of the razor, he observed details of her appearance that enabled him to complete his mental picture of her.

She was tall, slim, small-boned, and with that length of thigh that gave her the lithe swing of a man's stride as she walked. The face oval, with a very fair complexion and short, square chin, the high, flat cheek-bones giving an accented slant to eyes of so deep a blue that they were almost violet.

But as in that first moment, it was her hair that left the most vivid impression in his mind; as she changed her position, the light played over it, giving an illusion of the colour and movement of ripe corn in the wind.

The moment that he had been dreading came as he wiped the last of the soap from his face. She took the cigarette from her mouth, flicked it into the ashtray, and then spoke. His Norwegian was coming back to him—at least, enough to know that it was a direct question. He turned slowly, putting down the towel, his face a complete blank.

"Let's stick to English," he said.

She shrugged her shoulders. "Why?"

To gain time, he sat down on the other side of the bed, fiddling with his shoe-lace.

"Can't we leave everything for a few days? What you said in the lounge is true, I'm all in."

She did not seem to hear him.

"Tell me, how bad is that arm of yours?" She was speaking English again.

"Very nearly better. I shall be able to leave off the sling in a day or so."

There was a short pause.

"I should," she said quietly. "It looks odd when you forget and start to use it."

Then she swung her legs down to the floor. "I know you should rest, but there just isn't time. We sail on Thursday and I haven't got half the stuff yet—I couldn't, till we had talked."

She got up. "I'll leave you in peace until after lunch. I have one or two things still to do."

"I must get some money," he said.

"Haven't you any?"

"Until I can go to the bank, not very much."

"Enough to pay your bill here?"

"Yes, I think so, but why?"

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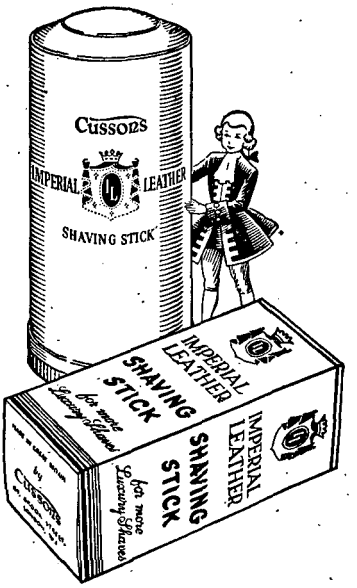

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"Because you are leaving here this afternoon. I shall come for you at two. We can go to the bank on our way to my flat."

"But I can't stay in your flat."

"Can't you? After our little talk—I think you will have to."

At the door she turned, and staring straight at him, added with a quiet threat in her tone: "When we talk, I must know—I insist that you tell me—*everything*."

★ ***The Second Part of "Hornets' Nest," by Christopher Landon, appears in next month's Argosy on sale February 10.***

ARGOSY PRIZE CROSSWORD

PRIZE-WINNERS OF CROSSWORD NO. 18

We are pleased to announce the five winners of Argosy's eighteenth Prize Crossword Competition:—

Mrs. M. F. Abbott, Moorpool Avenue, Birmingham.

W. V. Hancock Esq., Grange Road, Stoughton, Guildford, Surrey.

Herbert B. Heath Esq., Leek Road, Endon, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs.

Mrs. N. Hewison, Kirkwall, Orkney, Scotland.

Cecil Marks Esq., Onslow Road, Leagrave, Luton, Beds.

These readers who sent in the first correct solutions to be checked on the closing date, each receive a one-guinea book token.

SOLUTION

Across. 1, *Pickaxe*. 5, *Hopeful*. 9, *Irate*. 10, *Out and out*. 11, *Reproof*. 12, *Rancher*. 13, *Stole*. 15, *Dais*. 16, *Fry*. 19, *Apt*. 20, *Isis*. 21, *Style*. 23, *Aureate*. 24, *Chopper*. 26, *Roughcast*. 27, *Slump*. 28, *Spender*. 29, *Redskin*.

Down. 1, *Primrose*. 2, *Champ*. 3, *Anemones*. 4, *Eyolf*. 5, *Hit or miss*. 6, *Penang*. 7, *Foolhardy*. 8, *Later*. 14, *Opportune*. 15, *Disrepair*. 17, *Espoused*. 18, *Terrapin*. 22, *Lashed*. 23, *Arras*. 24, *Cater*. 25, *Pluck*.

PRIZE CROSSWORD NO. 21

Argosy's twenty-first Prize Crossword Competition appears on page 144. There will be one-guinea book tokens for the first five correct solutions checked on the closing date. If you do not wish to cut Argosy, copy your solution on to a plain sheet of paper, adding your name and address in capital letters. Entries should be completed *in ink*, and posted to: ARGOSY PRIZE CROSSWORD (No. 21), 3 Pilgrim Street, London, E.C.4. (Comp), to arrive by Wednesday, February 9th, the closing date.

We regret that entry must be limited to readers living in Great Britain, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands, and Eire. There is no entry fee and the Editor's decision is final.

Names of the prize-winners in this competition and the solution will appear in the issue of Argosy on sale April 7th.

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PRIZE CROSS WORD

No. 21

★

Rules of Entry on Page 143

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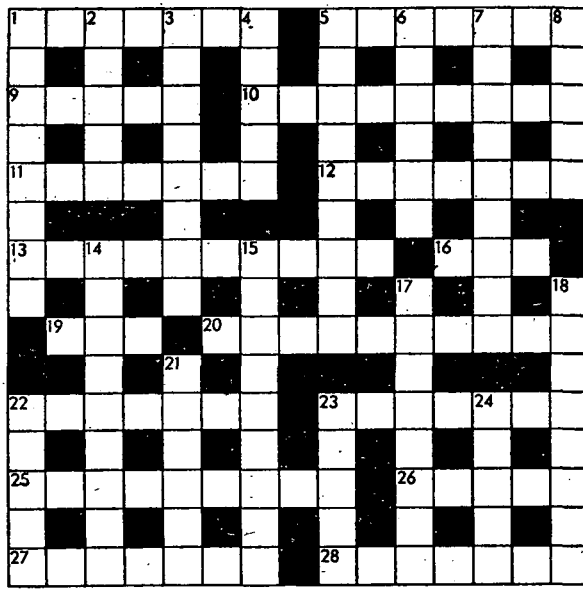

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CUT ALONG THE LINE

CLUES

Across

1 Father's cravats are edible in Cornwall (7).

5 Beat one tame animal to get another (7).

9 A genuine thousand is something to govern (5).

10 What Burns wanted to see from a new angle (9).

11 The sun can be dissolved with a broken colour (7).

12 After a heavenly messenger, we ring the bell (7).

13 In matters of form, three is often company (10).

16 Traditionally a sound sleeper (3).

19 Evidently the goddess of discord has had a meal (3).

20 A Fielding hero joins St. Paul's Ephesian adversaries —a savage lot ! (4, 6).

22 She was drastically rocked in Ancient Rome (7).

23 The sluggard was advised to visit this community centre (3-4).

25 Aristocratic attribute of University sportsmen ? (4, 5).

26 The little island has a tenant, it seems (5).

27 Six balls, one score ? (7).

28 " It is Richard, it is——; it is Godfrey in the gate ! " (Chesterton) (7).

Down

1 The Press Association joins the Academy *in situ* (8).

2 An ox might sit in this part of the theatre (5).

3 I claim to be movable—but wrongly (8).

4 This Trollope clergyman can't have been upright (5).

5 Mars roared and raged ? That's guaranteed (9).

6 Freeze an era and you're in for a chilly time (3, 3).

7 A very important person is dismembered and thrown to the carnivores (9).

8 Inquire within a returned saint (5).

14 Bury a disturbed duel ; it'll fill in time (9).

15 A quarter where bulls would be unwelcome ? (9).

17 A borrowed flower, apparently (4, 4).

18 An ungrammatical complaint of being delayed ? (8).

21 A limb of the Commons, possibly (6).

22 A boot in this shape is forbidden (5).

23 This reptile should be able to put two and two together (5).

24 Lo, I go to make this dwelling (5).

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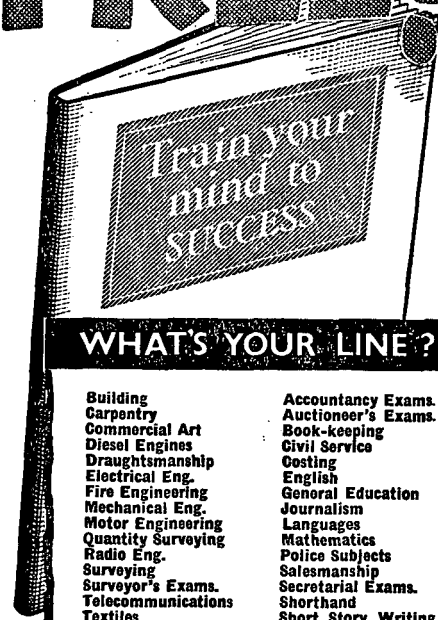

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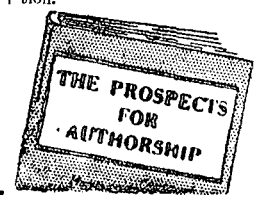
PRACTICAL RESULTS

Student 357/3015: I have had my story accepted by **BLACKWOODS** who are paying me £25 for it . . . *Student* 778/2119: I thought it might interest you to know that **THE COUNTRYMAN** has accepted a short article of mine on an old country custom . . . *Student* 184/315: As you suggested, I submitted the articles to the **NEW STATESMAN.** One was published on the 17th July. I have also had an article accepted by **MEN ONLY** . . . *Student* 181/282: You may be interested to hear that I had a letter from the Editor of **ARGOSY**; they offered me Twenty-five Guineas for my story . . . *Student* 591/287: You will be pleased that my article submitted for my Second Lesson was published in the **DAILY MIRROR** and I received Six Guineas for it . . . *Student* 120/288: I have established contact with the Editor of **PUNCH.** The item was accepted for "Charivaria" and is a good start . . . *Student* 1179/347: I succeeded in getting four Big Game stories into **COURIER** and another about "Shrove Tuesday." Another article appeared in the August issue of **BLACKWOODS** . . . *Student* 1954/157: I have just corrected a proof of my story for **WIDE WORLD**: they have since accepted another and I have sent in a third . . . *Student* 171/162: I have sold my story to **EVERYWOMAN** for 25 guineas . . . *Student* 1106/156: The B.B.C. accepted the script for the Light Programme—fee 9 guineas—after my first lesson . . . *Student* 141/76: The article which I wrote for the Second Test paper appeared in the **SUNDAY MAIL.** Thanks for the recommendation.



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